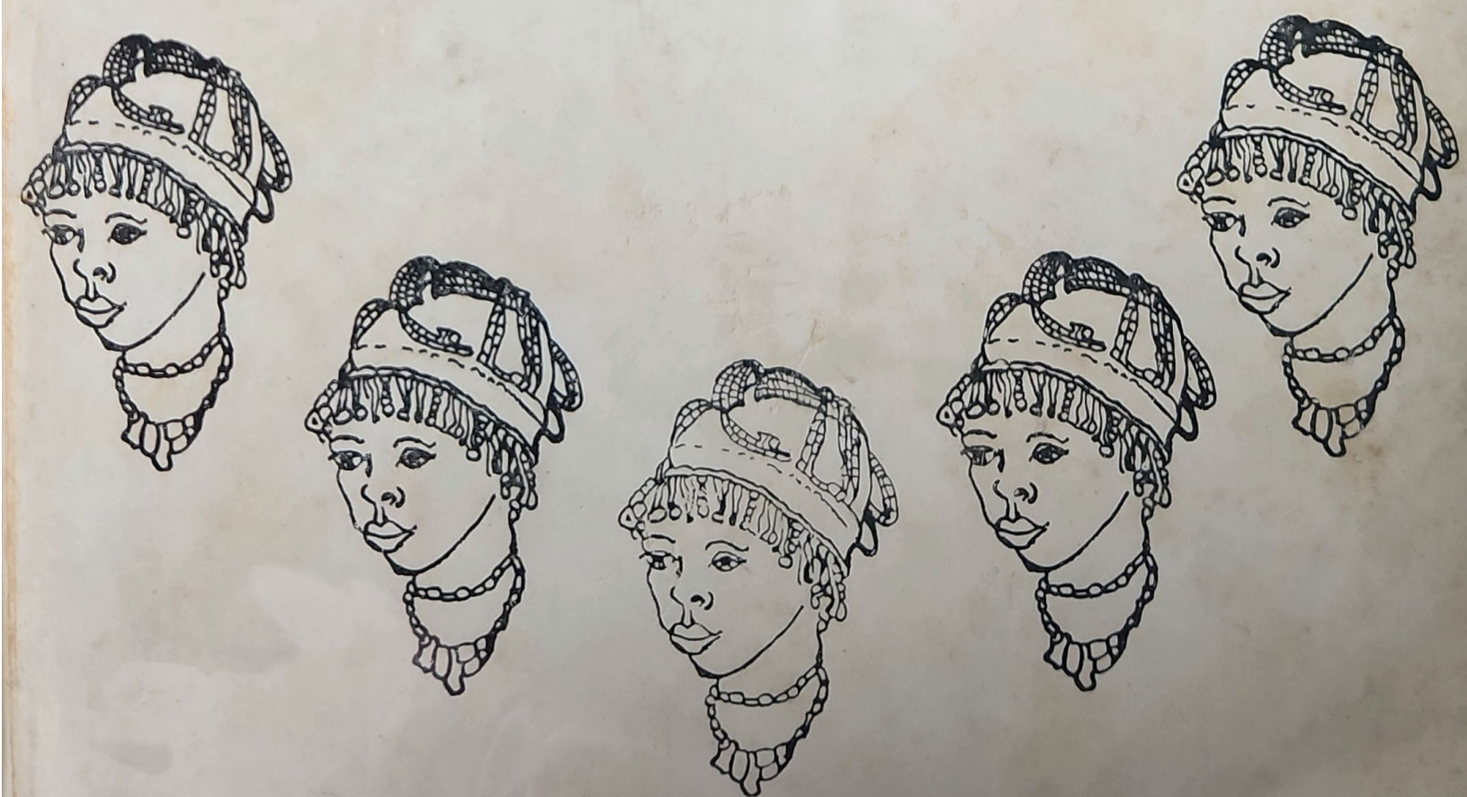
ISHAN

Native Laws and Customs

BY DR C. G. OKOJIE



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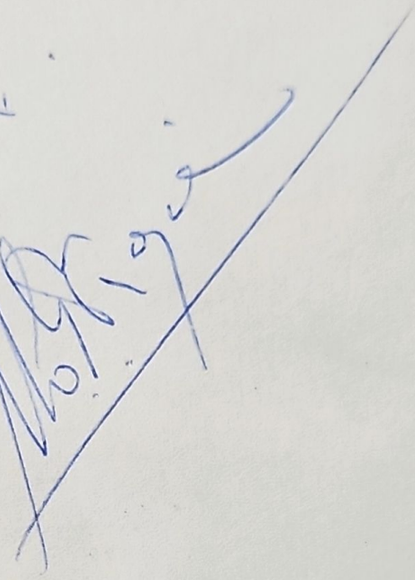
May this help you to understand us better.



ISHAN NATIVE LAWS

AND

CUSTOMS

BY

DR. C. G. OKOJIE L.S.M. F.I.C.S.

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DR. CHRISTOPHER GBELOKOTO OKOJIE L.S.M. (Nig.); F.I.C.S.
THE AUTHOR

DR. CHRISTOPHER GBELOKOTO OKOJIE, J.P.; L.S.M. (Nig.); F.I.C.S., the 11th son of the late Chief Okojie of Ugboha and Madam Helen Theresa Zuma who was herself the daughter of Eromosele the Great, was born on Thursday, April 9th. 1920 at Ugboha.

He began his education at the Catholic School, Ugboha, and completed his elementary education at Government School Ekpoma by winning a Scholarship to Government College, Ibadan in 1936.

Sponsored by Mr. M. E. Osobase he entered the Higher College, Yaba, for Premedical Studies in 1941. With another Government Scholarship he entered the Nigerian School of Medicine in October 1942 and qualified in August, 1947. After three years service under the Nigerian Medical Department he returned home to establish the ZUMA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, IRRUA on the 27th of March, 1950.

In 1956 he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in Surgery in addition to Smith-Mundt Scholarship which enabled him and his wife to proceed to the United States of America in September of that year. While Mrs. Okojie studied Nursing Education at Teacher's College, Columbia University, the Doctor specialised in Surgery at New York University Post-graduate Medical School, Bellevue Medical Centre. His specialty took him to the world renowned Mayo Clinic in Rochester Minnesota and Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore Maryland. Three months after his finals at N.Y.U. he obtained the Fellowship of the International College of Surgeons and was appointed the Nigerian Representative of that International Body. He returned home with his wife and their American born twin boys in October 1957, as Medical Director of Zuma Memorial Hospital.

In February 1959 he was appointed a member of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation by his Excellency the Governor-General of the Federation.

FOREWORD

THE traditional African history is essentially *remembered* history handed down from one generation to another. Its technique is constantly to keep alive the memory of the past; to preserve the past consciously in the present. In order to write the history of a non-literate society, therefore, one needs to collect traditional accounts and study the customs and institutions of the people. The task is urgent as those who are versed in traditional accounts and ancient customs are dying out and the educated young are preoccupied with other causes. It is all the more refreshing to find in Dr. Okojie, a busy medical practitioner, an avid devotion to the customs and traditions of his own people of Ishan.

In this work, Dr. Okojie devotes the second part to the history of his people, section by section, drawing upon traditional accounts but checking them against the background of his general historical knowledge. In the first part, Dr. Okojie unfolds the laws and customs distilling the essentials of an Ishan culture and by cross-references giving unity to the whole. He has laboured for years, collecting and analysing, and the result is an admirable work at once patriotic and enlightened.

Writing the history of non-literate people is relatively a new venture in which history must solicit the aid of the allied disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, etc. It needs intensive research if oral traditions are to be fashioned into acceptable historical materials. The first stage, however, is to collect and record oral traditions and whenever possible to publish the result. Others will work on that. It is on account of this that Dr. Okojie's work has both a relevance and a significance beyond its immediate interest to the Ishan people. By publishing his work Dr. Okojie ensures a further analysis of his material not only by the Ishan among whom it might arouse a healthy controversy but also among all those who are at present engaged in writing a history of Nigeria from detailed studies of the traditional accounts, law and cutoms of its various peoples.

S. O. BIOBAKU,
(*Registrar, University College, Ibadan,*
and
Director, Yoruba Historical Research Scheme).

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY WIFE, MRS. OLUFUNKE OKOJIE, S.R.N. S.C.M. (NEE OLAYEMI PHILLIPS), WHO, BORN AND BRED IN LAGOS WITH HER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN ENGLAND, WAS UNFRIGHTENED OF ALLEGED JUNGLE LIFE IN ISHAN WHICH SHE NOW PROUDLY CALLS HER HOME.

LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

My Dear Reader,

The book you are about to read is titled ISHAN NATIVE LAWS AND CUSTOM. You will find in it a lot more than mere laws and custom; this is because I am convinced that one cannot really understand a people's custom without a knowledge of its history, social background and the environmental influences that might have necessitated many apparently puzzling anomalies difficult to reconcile by the stranger.

I would want you to know from the outset that you are about to wade through a mass of history, tradition and Ishan way of life affecting a period of some 500 years. Collection of materials by one proud to be born and bred in Ishan is easy — but the sifting of evidence, much of which is not only confused but unbelievably biased, is not just difficult but requires something more than a deep sense of responsibility: the fear of God.

No one who has not attempted a job of this nature can realise the near insurmountable difficulties that beset us who today have the courage to chronicle all that had transpired in this long period of dare-devil activities, with nothing to build upon. Our only connection with our largely unmourned past consists of the shrines and the old men, who handicapped by senility and illiteracy, leave the talking to younger men most of whom are argumentative, egoistic and answer every question with one aim: to make only their opinions (which invariably have been considerably influenced since the advent of the Europeans) recorded or be damned forever. Another difficulty which created far unnecessary cross-checking for me and put the appearance of this book back by over six months arose out of the ostentatious answers one gets to questions concerning a neighbouring village or town; people in one village habitually gave stories purporting to establish that until recently that village was a vassal of their own village; for example, while Ubiaja claims quite erroneously that Ugboha was founded by an offending Ubiaja Prince, Udo claims that Ubiaja like Okhuesan was an offspring from Udo, while Ewohimi claims that Udo itself did not exist until a Prince of Ewohimi went off to found a kingdom of his own; therefore Ugboha originated from Ewohimi!

From a people ransacked by clanishness and class warfare, I found it impossible to get correct information on practically any matter. As I went from village to village the result was the same; people gave *ad hoc* answers, always to suit the matter under discussion, or to support their own pet views or deliberately gave answers in favour or against the Enigie, Ekhaemon (chiefs) or commoner depending upon whether the person granting the interview was himself an Onojie, a chief or a commoner. An example is given by the various answers I got to the simple question — "What do you in this town do to an economic tree from which a man has had a fatal fall!!?" Every Onojie answered that the tree automatically became the Onojie's property while the length and breadth of Ishan, every commoner without equivocation answered — "We cut it down!" Or yet another example — "In the olden days who in the village was more powerful — the Odionwele or the Okhaemon?" All the Ekhaemon and the Enijie who created them answered — "Ekhaemon, of course," while the elders like one exasperated Odionwele at Ekpoma for an answer said, "The Onojie creates Okhaemon and Odionwele creates the Onojie — you can then answer your own question, my boy!"

When I began the collection of materials for this work seriously eight years ago I used to be shocked to get answers to one question one day and coming back a few days afterwards I got completely opposite answers from the same elders. In 1953 when I had become surer of my knowledge of Ishan custom I had to take a recourse to more concrete methods than the usual mere questions and answers. For example, I asked a group of elders: "What grade is a man after he had performed the expensive Clothing Ceremony?" Like one man they answered — "He now ranks with the Edion (elders)." Then I followed up with "Suppose in age he was really of Egbonughe Grade, but owing to his being from a wealthy family he was able to undertake the ceremony — what happened?" Came the astonishing answer — "Ah! he must sweep the street!" Astonishing because in Ishan custom, Edion or anybody in their grade do not sweep the street! What I wrote down as the correct answer to my first question was, "The Clothing Ceremony conferred certain respects on a man who had not reached the age of entering the Edion Grade;" which is true because in some parts of Ishan a wealthy man could clothe his 10-year son — but that did not make the boy begin to rank with the Edion.

Added to falsehoods emanating from ignorance and in some cases deliberate, I got into difficulties from the inexplicable suspicion of most Ishans. On one occasion an Onojie was answering my questions on native laws and custom when a man whispered into his ears; he ended his sentence with ".....Eh, yes, go and return and we will be ready with our answers." At Ekpoma a responsible man told me Ekpoma people came from Ifeku Island on the Niger and a week after I put the same question to him in the course of an ordinary conversation. To my utter surprise he told me Ekpoma came from Benin. In disgust I challenged his double talk and smiling with pity in his eyes he said, "You see we saw hell from this type of work by enquiring Administrative Officers years ago and at the end places were grouped with their traditional enemies: who knows if I told you we came from Benin, at the end and as a result of your book we might find ourselves paying perishing homage to the Oba of Benin as of old!"

The other sources of information were the shrines of all types in Ishan. These shrines are the unrecognized and now despised archives of our past and their OHEN (priests) and Esukhure are today the true custodian of Ishan tradition, hence I feel it would be a pity if we allowed civilization and other religions to sweep them away before we realise their cultural and historical value. To be able to extract the unwritten stories round these shrines the enquirer must himself be versed in Ishan Custom and added to this are the suspicions and jealousy of the priests who take every question as a transgression on their sacred perimeter.

Dear Reader, you are now in a position to appreciate the infinite difficulties under which I have undertaken this onerous job. You will therefore be less hasty in passing judgment on the worth of the book. I am far from claiming perfection but I have sincerely and responsibly taken great pains to write what I have checked from all angles. Indeed the real strain came when I had completed the writing and began cross checking on facts. In 365 interviews which this entailed I went round every town in Ishan.

Yet I know there will be many who out of prejudice, envy and overt unkindness will read only a passage and shut the book with — "Nonsense, absolute trash!" To those I would say, "I am only constructing a ladder of encouragement with which future literary brains amongst us Ishans

will rise to greater heights; you add another rung to this ladder and you will be doing your country infinite service." There will be others who would feel I have treated my people too frankly or too harshly. To them I would like to say that the beginning of wisdom is to be able to call things by their right names. To us who are opening the road to others, we owe it as a sacred duty to record nothing but the truth as presented to us — bitter or sweet. Future historians and research workers will bless us if we Ishans without senseless sentiments and false modesty chronicled facts without deceptive embelishments calculated to portray us as civilized right from our origin. Our primitive start does not dwarf our future mental ability and national greatness. On the contrary what I have written amply proves that we are growing.

For months after the publication of this work I expect an avalanche of historical fire-works! I expect abuses, praises and arguments — in fact the hornet's nest will be thoroughly stirred but in the midst of this our people will ask more questions about their origin, traditions and custom which were being labelled indiscriminately as PRIMITIVE and better forgotten. If I succeed in creating that amount of stimulus I will consider my labour in the last eight years amply rewarded.

Should you find this book useful, you will join me in expressing deep appreciation to all the elders, Enijie, Ohen Ebo, Chief Jacob Igharevba, that erudite son of Benin and curator of the B. N. A. Museum, who not only granted me several interviews but showed me round the remains of our great City of Origin, and to my wife whose patience and encouragement enabled me to carry on despite the fact that for 2 years, I disorganized her domestic time-table and turned her cherished Sitting Room into something between a shrine and a Museum!

Wishing you a profitable reading.

DR. XTO. G. OKOJIE.

February 15th 1960.

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MAPS (Attached)

I. — Benin Province in Nigeria

II — Ishan in Benin Province

III — Ishan Division showing Chiefdoms

PLACING ISHAN ON THE MAP

This page is here included to help in reading the Map. All the name that appeared on the Maps are here spelt and written out clearly.

MAP I:

Benin Province in Nigeria.

NORTHERN REGION.
WESTERN REGION.
EASTERN REGION.
CAMEROONS.
LAGOS, PORT HARCOURT, LOKOJA, KANO, R. NIGER, R. BENUE.

MAP II:

Ishan Division in Benin Province.

BENIN:
Benin City, Uhiele, Ehor, Ujamen.

KUKURUKU:
Sabongidda, Afuze, Otwa, Igarra, Ekpesi, Sebe, Eme, Agbede, Agenegbode, Auchi, Idah.

ISHAN DIVISION:
Ewu, Irrua, Ekpoma, Iruekpen, Igor, Igueben, Ekpon, Ewohimi, Ohordua, Emu, Ubiaja, Ugboha, Uromi.

ASABA:
Onije, Agbor, Umunede, Ogwashi-Uku, Isele-Uku, Asaba, Onitsha. Ifon, R. Niger.

MAP III:

Ishan Division showing Chiefdoms, Principal Towns and Important Roads

Onitsha, Asaba, Ibuzo, Otulu, Illah, Ebu, Akuku, Onitsha Olona, Isele-Uku, Ubulu-Uku, Ogwashi-Uku, Onitsha Ugbo, Idumuje-Ugboko, Umunede, Agbor, Onije, R. Ossiomo, Benin City, Ehor, Oke, Uhiele, Agbanikaka, Uhonmora, Sabongidda, Sobe, Ifon, Eme, Ozalla, Erha, Afuze, Otwa, Okpe, Igara, Sebe, Ekpesi, Warake, Avbiele, Auchi, Ekperi (Ekwele), Fugar, Ibie-Eku, Agenegbode, Idah, R. Niger, Udaba, S. Ifeku, N. Ifeku, R. Alika, Alegbete, Awain, Ujagben, Agbede.

Ukhun, Idoa, Ewu, Uzea, Ama, Uroh, Ugboha, R. Oha, Amalu, R. Obhu, Oria, Uroh, Ilushi, Iyenlen, Okporokporo, Orowa, Emu, Ohordua, Ewohimi, Ekpon, Amahor, Ebai, Ugun, Ujiogba, Urohi, Ujamen.

EKPOMA:
Iruekpen, Idumebo, Ihonmidumu, Igor, Illeh, Egoro, Egoro Amede.

IRRUA:
Sugbenu, Ujabhoe, Ibore, Ibhiolulu, Afuda, Idumu-oza, Eko-Omojoudu.

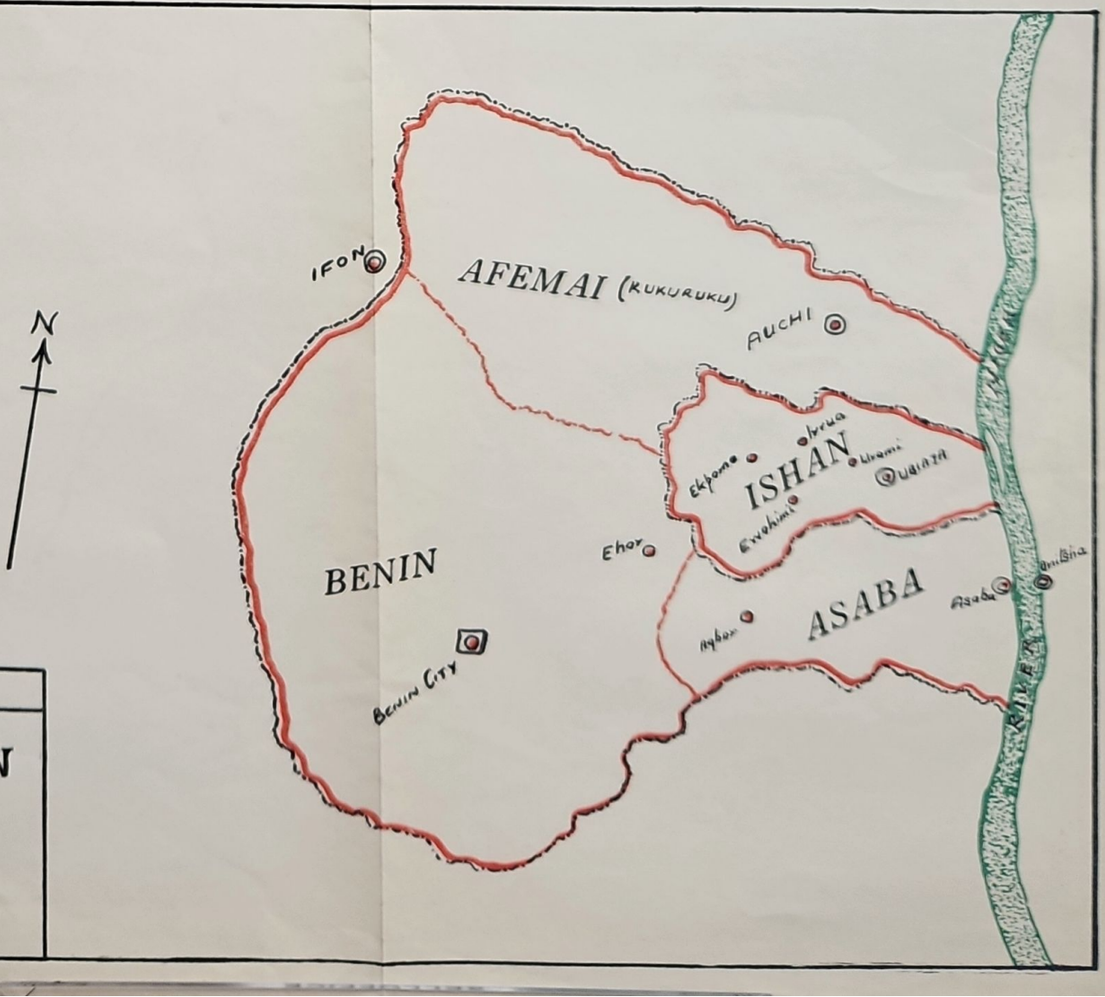
UROMI:
Ubierumu, Efandion, Idumu-oza, Egbele, Udomi.

UBIAJA:
Ahia, Okhuesan, R. Ilah, Ewatto, Udo, Udoneria, Ewossa, Ebelle, Okalo, Ogwa, Igueben, Ekekhen, Umelen, Ugbegun, Ebudin, Izogen, Egoro Na Oka.

PLACING ISHAN ON THE MAP

MAP I

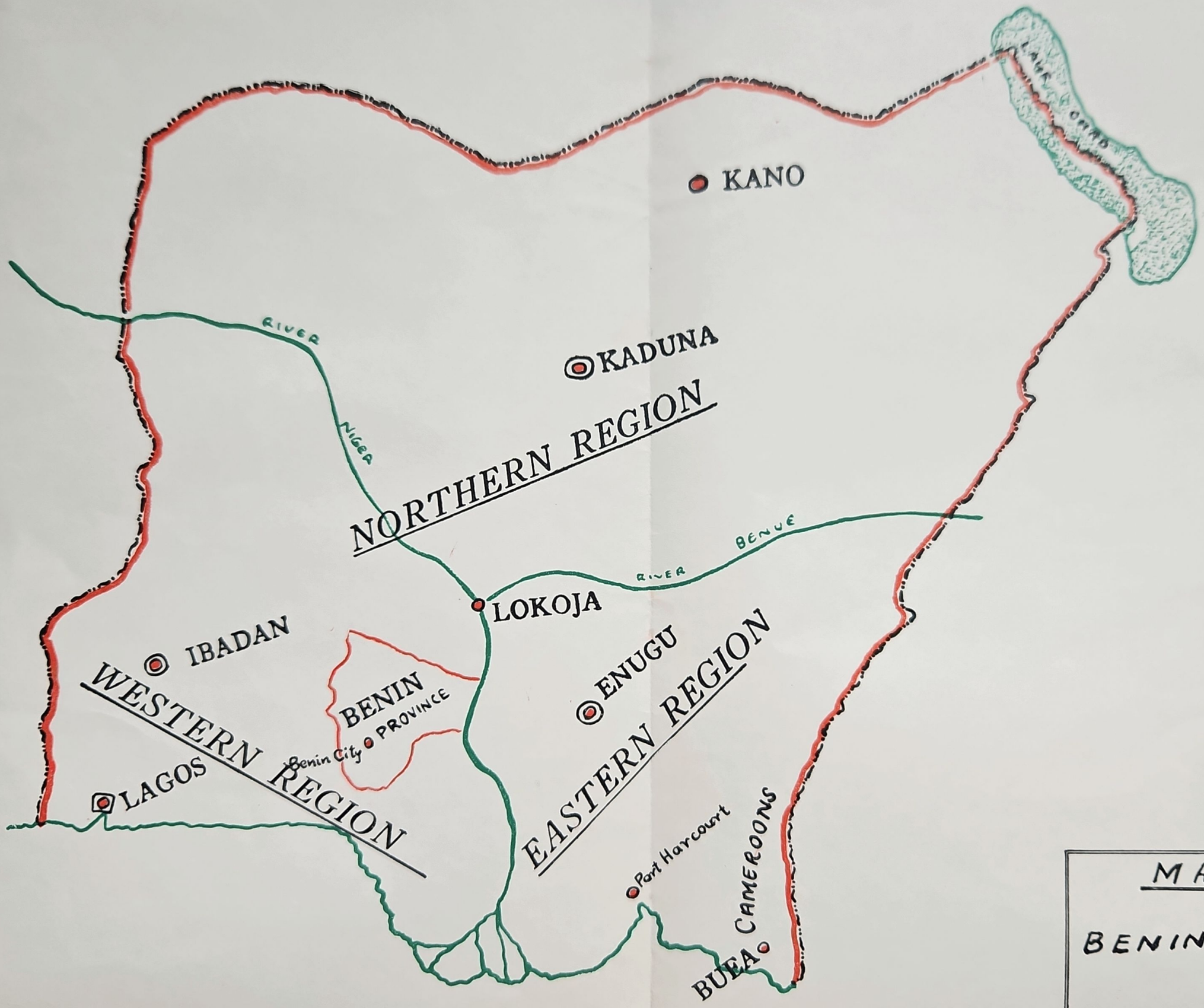
BENIN PROVINCE IN NIGERIA



MAP II

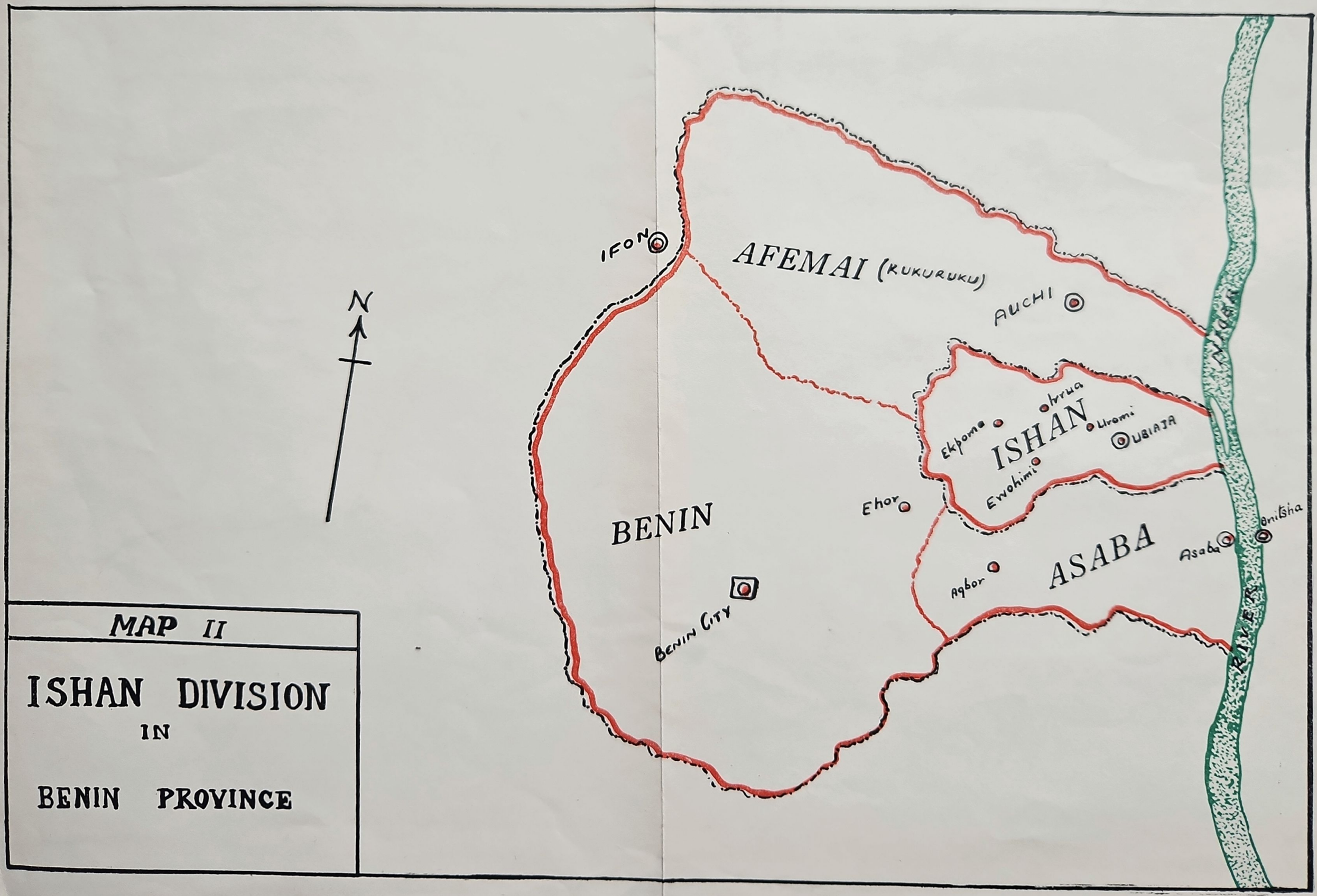
ISHAN DIVISION IN BENIN PROVINCE

PLACING ISHAN ON THE MAP



MAP I

BENIN PROVINCE IN NIGERIA



MAP II

ISHAN DIVISION
IN
BENIN PROVINCE

N

Okpe
Igarra
Uwarrahe
Ofwa
Sebe
AUCHI
Agenegbode
Idah
Afuze
Sobongidda
Eme
IFON
Uhomora
Agbede
Sobe
Agbanikoka
Ujagbe
EGORO
Eguare
Amiede
UKHUN
Idoa
Iruekpen
Ihomidumu
Ilushi
EWU
EKPOMA
Idingabon
Ebhiokio
Alagbete
Olilin
Ebulon
IRRUA
Ughalo
Ubhidulu
Ujabore Oke
Ubore
Udomi
UZEA
Uroh
NORTHERN IFEKU
Akahia
OPOJI
Ame
Ihue
EHOR
Amedeokhion
Ekpele
Ivue
Ubierumu
Umolon
Ekekhon
Egoro oka
Ebudin
UGBEGUN
URHOHI
UROMI
Efandion
OHPA RIVER
OBHU
R. OBHU
UGBOHA
SOUTHERN IFEKU
RIVER NIGER
Ijogen
IGUEBEN
EKO UBADIN
Ahia
Ogbegun
UJIOGBA
OGWA
UBIAJA
UDO
Udegheria
ORIA
UGUN
Bomalo
EBELLE
OKHUESSAN
Ikeken
Illushi
OWU
EWATTO
UTOR RIVER
BENIN CITY
EWOSSA
Otaigben
EMU
UROH
OBOTA STREAM
AMAHOR
EKPON
EWOHIMI
IYAGUN STREAM
OHORDUA
OROWA
Iyenlen
Akuku
Ibie
Onitsha Lango
Ebu
Illah
Onitsha
Iqbake
Onije
Idumuje Ugboko
OTULU
Ibuzo
Isele Uku
Onitsha Ugbo
ASABA
Ogwashi-Uku
Ummede
AGBOR
R. Ossiomo

MAP III (diagramatic)

ISHAN DIVISION

Showing Principal towns (Eguare) bearing the names of the Chiefdoms with main Roads as they exist today.

KEY

- Eguare or Principal town of each Chiefdom.
- Main Roads.
- Only passable roads
- Rivers and Streams
- Divisional Boundaries
- Clan boundaries

N

Sebe
Uwarrahe
Ofwa
Igarra
Afuze
Saboigioda
Eme
Uhomora
AUCHI
Agbede
Agenegbode
Oldah
IFON
Sobe
Agbanikoka
Ilhie
Ujagbe
EGORO
Equare
Amede
UKHUN
Idda
Iruekpen
Ihomidumu
Iwoh
EWU
EKHOMA
Idinegbon
Ebhoikio
Alagbete
Olilin
Ebulen
IRRUA
Ugbalo
Ibhidulu
Ujabore Ohe
Ujabore
Udomi
UZEA
Uroh
NORTHERN IFEKU
RIVER NIGER
Akahia
OPOJI
Ihue
EHOR
ONE
Egoto aka
Ebudin
UGBEGUN
Umolon
Ubierumu
Nue
Ugbole
Amedeakhian
UROMI
Efandion
Ekekhon
IGUEBEN
Jogen
URHOHI
OBHU RIVER
R. Obhu
UGBOHA
SOUTHERN IFEKU
RIVER NIGER
EKO
UBADIN
UJIOGBA
OGWA
Abia
Ogbenyen
UBIAJA
UDO
Ujameria
UGUN
Bokalo
OKHUESAN
Ikeken
ORIA
Ilushi

MAP III (diagramatic)

ISHAN DIVISION

Showing Principal towns (Eguare) bearing the names of the Chiefdoms with main Roads as they exist today.

KEY

- Equare or Principal town of each Chiefdom.
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- Clan boundaries

ISHAN NATIVE LAWS AND CUSTOM

PART I. LAWS AND CUSTOM

CHAPTER I

NOMENCLATURE:

THE name ESAN — pronounced with *E as in the A of Ape, S as in the S of Sand, A as in the A of Bank, N as in the N of Man* — came from the Benin word ESAN meaning JUMP or FLEE. The name came to be applied to all the districts now forming ISHAN during the reign of OBA EWUARE the Selfish. By then many of the important districts in this territory were already in existence as important groups, *e.g.* URUWA (Irrua), URONMUN (Uromi), EKUNMA (Ekpoma), UBIAZA (Ubiaja), etc., but they were known by their individual names and there was no common name. They knew they had a common stock and that was all.

The actual thing that came to bind them together was EWUARE'S wooing of 1463. At Benin the leaders or EKAKULO met and were given similar titles to enable them rule their respective communities. Yearly they went personally or through accredited agents to pay homage to their overlord. Their reunions in the place of their origin with the common description of how they broke away resulted in the group name of ESAN.

2. Location:

Ishan (ESAN) is a division in the Benin Province, bounded on the North and North-West by the Kukuruku Division, on the West by the Benin Division, on the South by the Asaba Division and on the East by the River Alika and the River Niger. Until 1934 the Ora speaking people of Sabongidda were classed with the ESAN people. The population of UJAGBE, AMA with many AWAIN districts and ERHA speak ESAN — but like Anegbete on the North-East of Ugboha and the northern part of Ifeku (IHEKU) Island are now classed with the Kukuruku Division.

3. Grouping:

Before the advent of the Europeans the ESAN territory consisted of loosely connected CHIEFDOMS, each group being built round an ONOJIE most of whom descended from the early Bini EKAKULO or War Leaders of migrating or fleeing bands. But for certain blood relationships amongst some of the Ekakulo it will be more correct to say that the Units or Districts, each headed now by an Onojie, were in every respect distinct *e.g.* the ancestors of the ruling houses of Irrua, Uromi and Ugboha were said to be brothers. Apart from vague qualms over going to war with each other—usually expressed colloquially as "not seeing each others blood," Irrua was as related to Uromi or Uromi to Ugboha as Switzerland is to Germany or France to Italy, each an autonomous state. Even though at that time MIGHT was RIGHT, no Onojie with his people was subservient to another: they all except the sectional ones that came later owed allegiance to the OBA of BENIN. Notwithstanding the creation of OKAIJESAN Title by Oba AKENZUA on IKHIHIBHOJERE of Irrua early in the eighteenth century, the

Enijie were Lord supreme in their different districts and I have found no evidence of any one wielding a political authority over the rest; the title thus only meant the Onojie of Irrua took precedence when the ESAN Enijie were before the Oba or when they were rarely together in Ishan. Such meetings were infrequent and only occurred when they wanted to enact common Ishan Laws *e.g.* affecting inheritance, adultery, murder and fixing of market days.

The important chiefdoms in early Esan were:—

1.	Uruwa	(Irrua)
2.	Urọnmun	(Uromi)
3.	Ẹkunma	(Ekpoma)
4.	Ubiaza	(Ubiaja)
5.	Owọha	(Ugboha)
6.	Orikhimi	(Ewohimi)
7.	Ẹilu	(Ewu)
8.	Uzea	
9.	Emulun	(Emu)
10.	Okhuọdua	(Ohordua)
11.	Ebene	(Ebelle)
12.	Amahọ	(Amahor)
13.	Ọkalo	
14.	Ezẹn	(now extinct)
15.	Udo	
16.	Ugbẹgun.	

Iguebẹn came much later in 1516 after the Idah War and was ruled by the ỌKAIGUN—later made an Onojie.

Many people are stung when facts of history are given forgetting that a humble beginning hundreds of years ago is no slur on the attainments of individual Onojie in modern times. The truth is that in ISHAN 'A' the real fully established and distinct chiefdoms were Irrua, Ẹkpọma, Uromi, Ewu, Ubiaja, Udo and Ugbọha: they were all vassals of the Oba to whom they paid tribute through the Ojirrua. Their channel was Uhọmodẹ, that is, through Ehọr to Benin. Egoro and Opoji which today have their own respected and accredited Enijie were then closely tied up by blood and custom with Ẹkpọma. Oria though on Ugbọha land was closely administered from Uromi and Ubiaja. Okhuẹsan was similarly tied up with Ubiaja.

In ISHAN 'B' which included Ẹwohimi (then Orikhimi), Ohọrdua, Emu, Ebelle, Ọkalo, Amahọr, Ezẹn and the territory of Ọkaigun, Ẹwohimi was their headquarters through which they rendered their tributes to the Oba. The Onojie of Ẹwohimi in turn went via the Ezọmọn of Benin to the Oba. Their channel was through Igbanke and Agbor. Ẹwatto and Ẹwossa which were founded much later by Princes from Ẹwohimi, of course were subservient to their 'father' the Onojie of Ẹwohimi, and were thus at the beginning at least Sectional Enijie.

This is why from more recent times there appears to be competition between the Ojirrua and the Onojie of Ewohimi. Although amongst ISHAN 'A' Enijie, the Ojirrua's leadership after Akenzua I created him the Okaijisan, is not openly disputed, the position will be better understood when one bears in mind that it was only between the last 40 to 50 years that Ewohimi really began to associate fully with the rest of Ishan. Particularly after Eredia-uwa who had taken refuge at Ewohimi to escape death at the hands of his initially victorious brother Ogbebo in 1816 became Oba (Osemwede) the tie between Ewohimi and Benin became much closer and even till this day all the paraphernalia of office together

with the Palace Societies of Iwebo and Iweguae are still to be found in Ewohimi.

Notwithstanding the above when the Great Benin Empire was at its zenith Irrua was the Capital of the ESAN COLONY, just as Agbede was for Kukuruku, Agbor for Ika etc. When the Ishan Enijie met at the Oba's Palace the Ojirrua took precedence.

Communities grew and with the gradual decentralization of power Ishan progressed to the modern territorial units, each autonomous and headed by its own ONOJIE. These now are:—

1. Irrua
2. Uromi
3. Ekpoma
4. Ubiaja
5. Ugboha
6. Ewohimi
7. Ewu
8. Igueben
9. Ohordua
10. Ebelle
11. Ugbegun
12. Opoji
13. Okhuesan
14. Ekpon
15. Ewossa
16. Emu
17. Amahor
18. Ogwa
19. Ugun
20. Oria
21. Ewatto
22. Urohi
23. Uzea
24. Udo
25. Ukhun
26. Egoro
27. Ujiogba
28. Idoa
29. Orowa
30. Okalo, struggling and unrecognized.

Many of these grew as a result of the Government trying to clip the autocratic wings of the then fully known Enijie. Frankly, within 20 years of the coming of the British there were not more than a dozen and as things stood in 1920, the all powerful Ishan Council, wielding executive and judicial powers subject only to the Central Government, consisted of EIGHT ENIJIE: Imadogiemu of Opoji, for Ekpoma-Opoji areas, Eromosele of Irrua, Uwagbale of Uromi acting for his exiled father, Okojie of Ugboha, Oribhabor of Ohordua, Ojiealekhe of Emu, Ifebho of Ewohimi and Agbebaku of Ora.

4. Population:

The plateau is the more thickly populated portion of the Division and has the larger towns. Though it is only about a quarter of the size, it contains about three-fifths of the population.

According to the 1953 census the population of Ishan is 194,891, of which 92,570 are males and 102,321 females. In an area where wealth is denoted by the number of wives a man has, one should have expected a higher percentage of women. Of this population 13,138 are literate in the sense that they are able to write in Roman Script. Actually only 9,588 persons have education of up to Standard Two or more.

It is indeed difficult at first to ascertain what factors attracted settlement on the waterless plateau; usually the greatest incentive to settlement is water: the plateau has no streams! The next thing is DEFENCE or safety; once a man has gained access to a point on the plateau it is smooth sailing from Ekpoma to Ubiaja, or from Irrua to Igueben—there are neither hills nor valleys difficult to negotiate by an invader. It has a very good climate, cool and almost temperate, but our forefathers were so hardened to deaths from illness all of which were blamed on wizards, that they could not have bothered to think of health in choosing a site for their settlement. What then brought them here? From the history of individual settlement and the fact that all Ishan is an agricultural district, the one deciding factor which must have induced our people to settle in such a waterless area is FERTILITY. Amiele is said to have refused

to pass on to his destination because of the rich succulent Palm Nuts he saw at a place today called IRRUA; the great Warrior Eben seeing yams thrown away a year before develop so much, wondered what could have happened had the yams been actually planted and looked after. He sent word to the Oba that he would settle at the spot to farm and his cottage grew to become IGUEBEN.

5. Density:

With Ishans so scattered to form small cottages, villages and small towns it is not surprising that it has a density of about 165 per square mile! There are vast areas very sparsely populated. The most thickly populated portions are around Uromi, Ekpoma, Irrua and Ewohimi. The density can be ascertained from the population figures which in 1953 were as follows:—

1.	Uromi-Uzea	40,234
2.	Ekpoma Clan	22,193
3.	Irrua N. A.	21,382
4.	Ewohimi Clan	15,432
5.	Ubiaja Clan	9,896
6.	Igueben N. A.	9,801
7.	Ewu N. A.	9,074
8.	Ugbegun N. A.	6,394
9.	Ebelle Clan	5,238
10.	Illushi Clan	5,165
11.	Ohordua Clan	4,768
12.	Emu Clan	4,354
13.	Ewatto Clan	4,204
14.	Opoji Clan	3,915
15.	Ekpon N. A....	3,747
16.	Ewossa Clan	3,292
17.	Ogwa Clan	3,095
18.	Ugboha Clan	3,003
19.	Egoro Clan	2,586
20.	Amahor Clan	2,569
21.	Urohi Clan	2,385
22.	Ujiogba Clan	2,269
23.	Okhuesan Clan	2,166
24.	Ukhun-Idoa Clan	1,660
25.	Oria	1,101
26.	Ugun Clan	1,036
27.	Orowa Clan	759
28.	Udo Clan	411
29.	Onogholo	289

6. Population According to Modern Political Partitions:

After the re-organization following the Intelligence Report of 1931 to 1934 the following became the political units of Ishan and upon these were based the McCall Democratic Constitution of 1950:—

1. Uromi-Uzea N. A. with a population of ... ... 40,234.
2. Ugbegun N. A. ... ... 6,394.
3. S.W. Federation ... ... 14,207.
   - *a.* Amahor Clan
   - *b.* Ebelle Clan
   - *c.* Ogwa Clan
   - *d.* Ugun Clan
   - *e.* Ujiogba Clan

   } has its headquarters at Ebelle.

4. S.E. Federation with a population of 13,749
   a. Emu Clan
   b. Ohordua Clan
   c. Okhuesan Clan } has its headquarters at Emu.
   d. Orowa Clan
5. N.E. Federation with a population of ... ... 20,636.
   a. Ubiaja Clan
   b. Illushi Clan
   c. Udo Clan } has its headquarters at Ubiaja.
   d. Ugboha Clan
   e. Oria-Onogholo
6. Ivie-Uda-Esaba Federation with a population of ... 32,739.
   a. Ekpoma Clan
   b. Egoro Clan
   c. Opoji Clan } has its headquarters at Ekpoma.
   d. Ukhun-Idoa
   e. Urohi Clan
7. Ewohimi Federation with a population of ... ... 22,928.
   a. Ewohimi Clan
   b. Ewatto Clan } has its headquarters at Ewohimi.
   c. Ewossa Clan
8. Ekpon N.A. with a population of ... ... 3,747.
9. Ewu N.A. ... ... 9,074.
10. Igueben N.A. ... ... 9,801.
11. Irrua N.A. ... ... 21,382.

194,891.

7. Physical Environment:

Ishan Division which has a size of 1,162 sq. miles, could be divided into ISHAN 'A' and ISHAN 'B'. Ishan 'A' which is three-fifths of the Division by population and only about a third in size, contains the waterless plateau with an average height of 1,000 feet. Ubiaja is about 900 ft., Ewu, about 1,100 ft., while both Irrua and Uromi are each about 1,300 ft. above sea-level. The highest point is at Ivue, about half-way between Irrua and Uromi; it has a height of about 1,490 ft. above sea-level.

The Plateau consists mainly of the towns which were well established early in Ishan history, like Ekpoma, Irrua, Ewu, and Uromi with Ubiaja and Igueben at the edge of the escarpment. Ishan 'B' is the area rich in water and forests with the hard-working less sophisticated inhabitants living in the only areas of Ishan where hills and valleys exist. Ohordua, Okhuesan, Emu, Ewatto, Ewohimi, which was the most heard of in this area, Ebelle, Ewossa and Amahor form the main towns. The greater part of Ishan has no rocks, hills and valleys and as these features go with water, the waterless nature of the Ishan Plateau can be understood.

Until both parts of Ishan heard of the "money-jingling but confusion-causing" term "OWNER'S CONSENT," all Ishan was heavily wooded, rich in Iroko, Mahogany, Obechie (Ubhekhe), Ebony, Agba, Ekhinmin, Ekan etc. Most part of Ishan particularly Ishan 'A', is rich in LATRITE, causing the red roads and vegetations seen along the roads during the Dry Season. In Ishan 'B' where there are several Springs and Streams, the earth is white.

The climate throughout Ishan is cool—almost temperate all the year round in Irrua and Uromi areas. The heavy rains are from May

to October with some two weeks break in August. The onset and end of this season are heralded by Tornadoes and Thunderstorms which are of milder nature than in the rest of Nigeria. Though the Dry Season sets in after the first week of November the heat of the sun is much tempered by the Harmattan which lasts from November to February, the hottest season being February to April.

8. Features of Economy:

(*a*) *Agriculture:* Ishan is an agricultural country, everybody, man or woman, being simple farmers whose main food crops are yams, corn or maize, cocoyam, cassava and beans of various types; pepper, groundnuts, melons, bananas with plantains are subsidiary crops usually planted by the woman in the husband's farm. In Ishan 'A' most women have separate cocoyam and groundnut farms.

Farm year ends about the second week of December and any time after, the new year begins with the clearing of bush for the main farms and by March, yams are planted with corn immediately after the first heavy rain (Amen-Ukpe), usually round about the third week of the month. By May fresh corn is available and new yams July or early August.

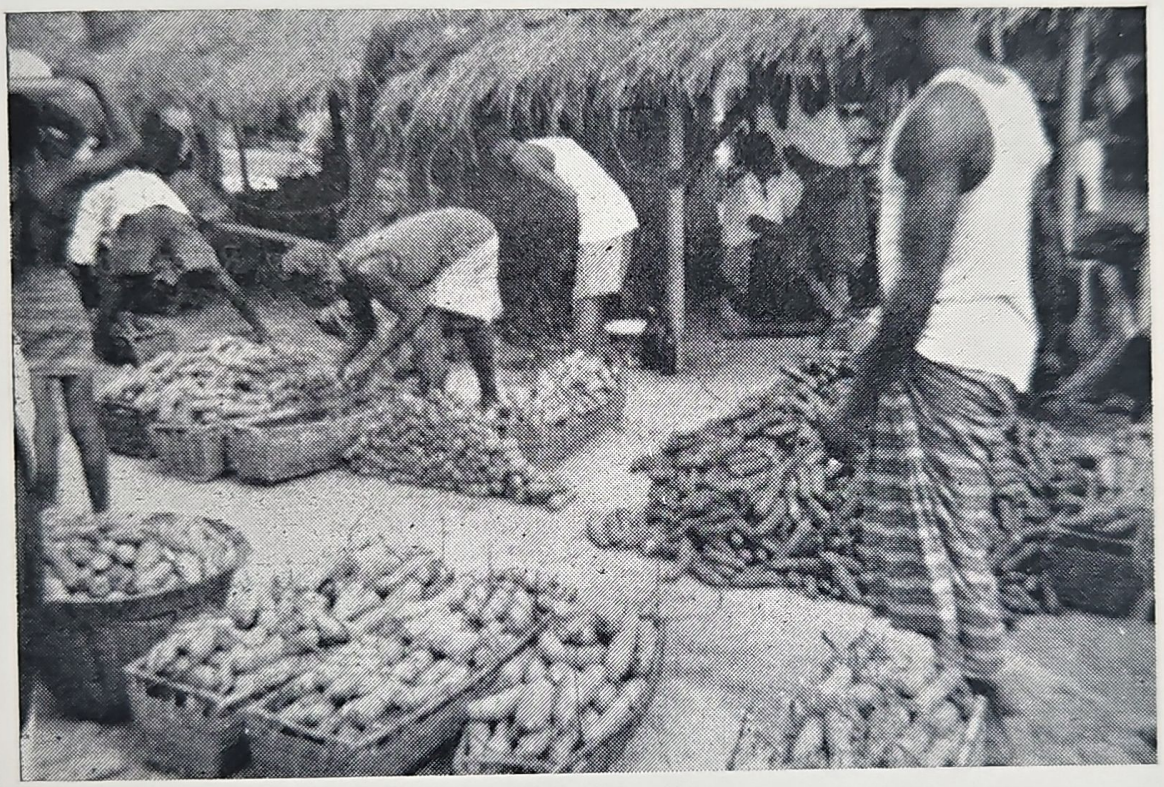
To a great extent most of the actual farm work is done by men but such crops as beans, melons, groundnuts and when Ishan made a name from the natural Khaki, ISHAN COTTON,—cotton, pepper etc., are definitely the woman's own. Women are also responsible for the marketing of surplus farm produce and the making of palm oil.

Economic Crops consist of Cotton, and only in modern times, Rubber. Apart from the nature of the soil, it is near impossible for money yielding Cocoa to grow in the waterless plateau. The few trees that manage to survive are ruthlessly cut down by white-ants. Unfortunately the famous Khaki Ishan Cotton has practically disappeared mostly because of the exhaustion of the soil and the wholesale abandonment of our weaving industry.

Palm oil and kernels are produced by the women who buy the ripe nuts from the men for local use and export, all over Ishan. The method used in making the oil is crude and arduous, but about 90% of this oil is GRADE ONE. First the ripe fruits are picked out and boiled and then put in a large wooden trough; when cool, the woman jumps into it and mashes the soft fruits with her feet. Water is then poured into the trough, mixed thoroughly so that while the nuts and fibre sink, the oil comes to the top as a scum and is ladled into a pot. This is done several times until all the oil has been removed. The nuts are saved and the fibres used for lighting and fire-making. The scum is now boiled over a fire in a large pot until all the water has evaporated. The surface is skimmed off leaving impurities and some oil which is delicious for roasted yam eating. The second pot is again boiled until what is left is almost pure oil, red and transparent with a minimum of deposit. Both the oil and kernels come from Oil Palms which grow luxuriantly all over Ishan as common property.

(*b*) *Trade:* The Ishans are poor traders and but for Uromi women who are tireless traders one would have been correct to say that the only trade in Ishan until recently was limited to the sale and buying of local foodstuffs in the markets. This is understandable if one remembers that until the advent of the white men, people hardly ventured beyond the confines of their settlement.

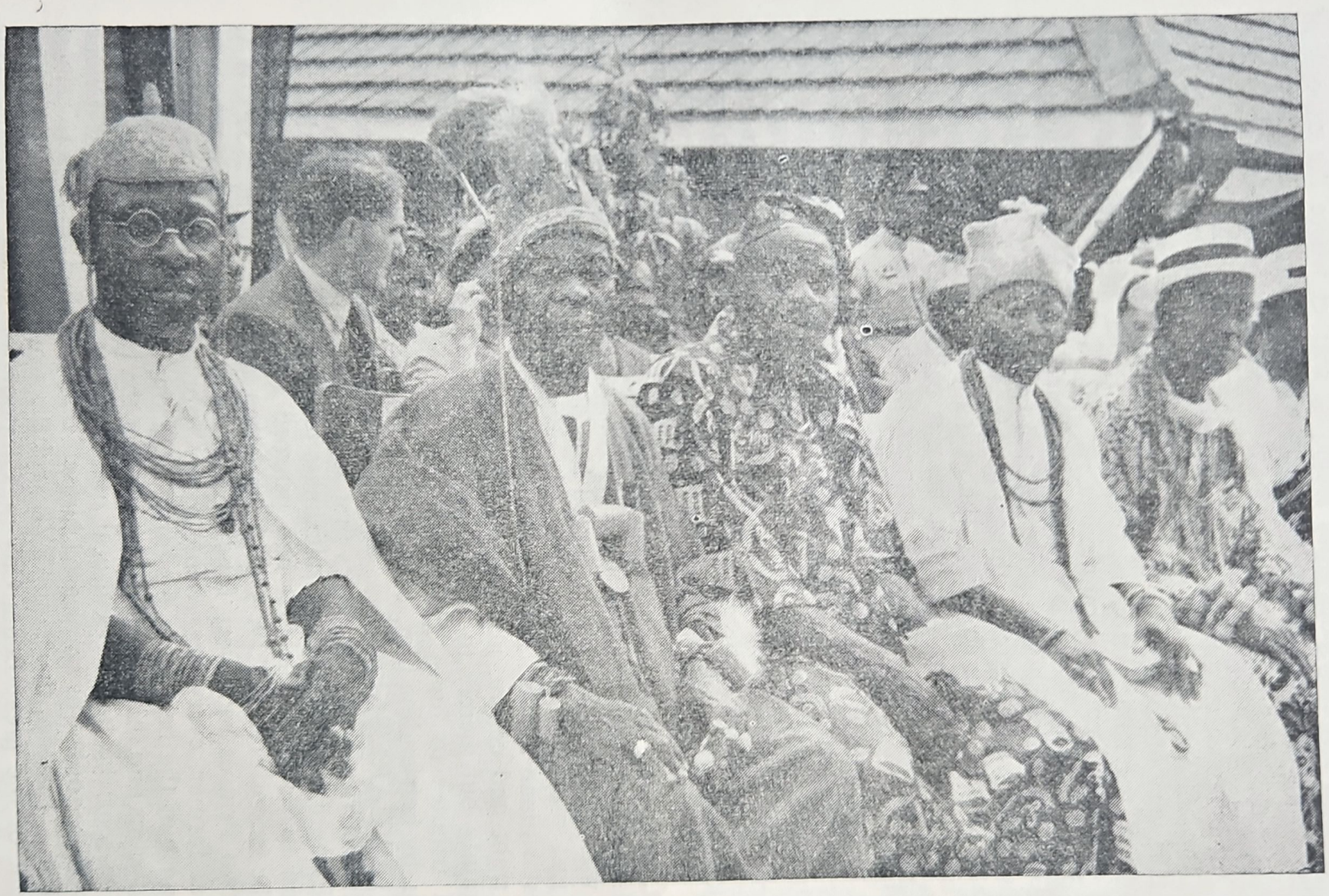
(*c*) *Crafts:* The only one of note is cloth weaving in which Uromi and Ohordua women with their UKPON-ODODO (Multi-coloured



At the seed-yam market in Ojigolo (Ilushi). Each basket of seeds cost about 40/-. *The yam planting season is March and early April.*

Loading Palm Oil drums at Ilushi — Ishan's only River Port. Laboriously made, Ishan Palm Oil is about 90% Grade I.

GARRI, fried grated cassava, introduced into Ishan round about 1925, has almost ousted yams as Ishan's staple food by virtue of its cheapness and ease of conversion into food. The woman to the left is wearing UKATA made of date palm straw. It was our equivalent of the umbrella for rain and sun.



Reminiscent of yearly return to the OBA'S Palace
In this picture can be seen the Obi of Agbor (1st) and Olokpe of Okpe (4th) from left.

Cloth) were adepts. The vertical Hand Looms are used. In the olden days there were few Blacksmiths who only confined themselves to sharpening cutlasses and making of crude hoes and knives. People around Ugboha and Illushi got most of their agricultural implements from Igbo-Awka. Pottery is carried on by women in isolated areas like Ibore of Irrua, Uzea, Idegun in Ugboha etc. But most women of Ishan 'A' get all their cooking pots from Iruekpen market where the experts of Ozalla and Obhiato come to sell their wares.

9. History of Origin:

All Ishan came directly and indirectly from Benin as could be seen from the uniformity of features, language, custom etc., all akin to Benin. Yet it is very important for the reader to remember all the time that the history of the Ruling Houses, that is the Enijie, is quite different from that of the subjects or commoners.

The origin of Ishan is closely connected with the pot-bellied OBA EWUARE the Selfish who some call the Great. There is no doubt that he did quite a lot of great things in his selfish lifetime: he built the Greater Benin, but in so doing, the primary incentive was consideration for his great self. As a Prince, he was called OGUN and had been banished from Benin with his younger brother UWAIFIOKUN. On the death of his father ORỌBIRU, Ogun sent his younger brother to the City to ascertain if the elders were in favour of his return. His brother however tricked him by telling them that he had not seen his senior brother ever since they left the City and believed Ogun to be dead; Uwaifiokun, the junior brother, was therefore installed Oba. Ogun, hearing of this, came down to the City armed, and instead of showing himself to the Kingmakers, waylaid his own brother and murdered him. He was then made the Oba, but before this, for vengeance over his early banishment, he let hell loose on the City by setting fire to it, resulting in a great conflagration which ravaged the City for two days and two nights; and that was a City which had accepted him as Oba despite the fact that he had just murdered the last Oba, his own brother. He murdered the richest woman around Benin and appropriated her treasures: he warred left, right and centre, not necessarily because the rulers challenged his suzerainty but merely to take them captive and make their people pay extra tributes to him. He tricked the powerful and fearless Iken of Uselu by befriending him, sent him to war and replaced him with his own (EWUARE'S) first son, and because this young man was acting for the warrior Iken, the Oba's first son at Uselu was titled EDAIKEN.

Ewuare's greatest act of selfishness resulted in ESAN. At that time he had two sons. The first had usurped Iken's Uselu as the Edaiken and the second son, EZUWARHA, had been made the Onojie of IYOWA. The two Princes were very fond of each other and the Onojie who was a great farmer, every year went to pay tribute to his senior brother by sending him the best from his farm. On one occasion he sent the very best of yams and this so pleased his brother the Edaiken, that to encourage him, he sent the best agricultural implements in the land. The Onojie seeing these tools was so pleased himself that he called his wife to rejoice with him. Instead, the Benin EVE said the words that drove our ancestors out of the great Benin City—"Oh poor fool," she scorned, "You just cannot understand what your polished brother meant; while he is too princely to farm, he had sent implements that would make you till more of the soil and make you a greater jungle man—and you rejoice!" Ezuwarha became very ashamed and hurt by his brother's 'unkind' treatment and swore that the Edaiken must die. He called in the most

powerful medicine man in Benin, who made some poisonous powder that easily fumes for him. In a calabash he sent this unto his brother with the instruction that he must be alone when he opened it. The unsuspecting Edaiken seeing a parcel from his beloved brother hurried into his room unaware that he was followed by his over-zealous chamberlain. In his excitement to see what his brother sent him he held up the calabash close to his face, opened it and some of the powder and fumes went into his nose and throat. With a groan he fell and died outright. The chamberlain seeing what happened, with a full presence of mind he quickly shut the calabash, locked the door and swore to avenge his master's treacherous death. He ran out and told the messengers from the Onojie of Iyowa to wait for his master's message, ran into the harem and soon returned with the loveliest damsel in Uselu, saying, "Tell the Onojie, the Edaiken is so pleased with the special present sent that he has rewarded him by sending him the precious gift in this calabash (the same that finished the Edaiken) with this smashing young woman as a bride. He must be alone with this young damsel when he opens the parcel." The unsuspecting messengers collected the parcel and left happily flanking the radiating girl. On reaching him and reporting, the Onojie could not wait to hear the end of the message — he was too anxious to be alone not really with the calabash but with this angel.

Rushing into his room with his eyes drinking in the radiant beauty of his bride, he had no time to look and see that it was his own dirty trick that was going to recoil on him; he opened the calabash — and down went Oba Ewuare's only son alife! While Uselu was weeping blood over the death of the Edaiken, all Iyowa went into deep mourning. Of course there was no living person who could go and tell the Oba, and not just any Oba, but Ewuare, that his only two sons had died the same day. The fate of that informant would be as good as if he said to the Oba — "I have just liquidated your two sons!"

All the elders and chiefs were terrified and could well imagine what the Oba would do on hearing — but what Ewuare did when he finally heard, showed him up as the selfish man he was: he summoned all Benin in a second and passed his inhuman, wicked and selfish LAWS OF MOURNING:—

(a) Now Ewuare the greatest monarch in the Great Benin Empire has no more sons: who else has any more right to get children! He therefore forbade sexual intercourse in the land!

(b) All living persons in the domain must join in the mourning of his two sons: no more washing, sweeping of the house or compound, not to talk of drumming or dancing in the land.

(c) As the most delicious foods are cooked ones, no more fire must be made within smoke sight of Benin.

(d) The only qualifications to these Ewuare-fair Laws were that they affected every body in Benin including the great Ewuare of course: the Laws were clamped on for THREE YEARS!

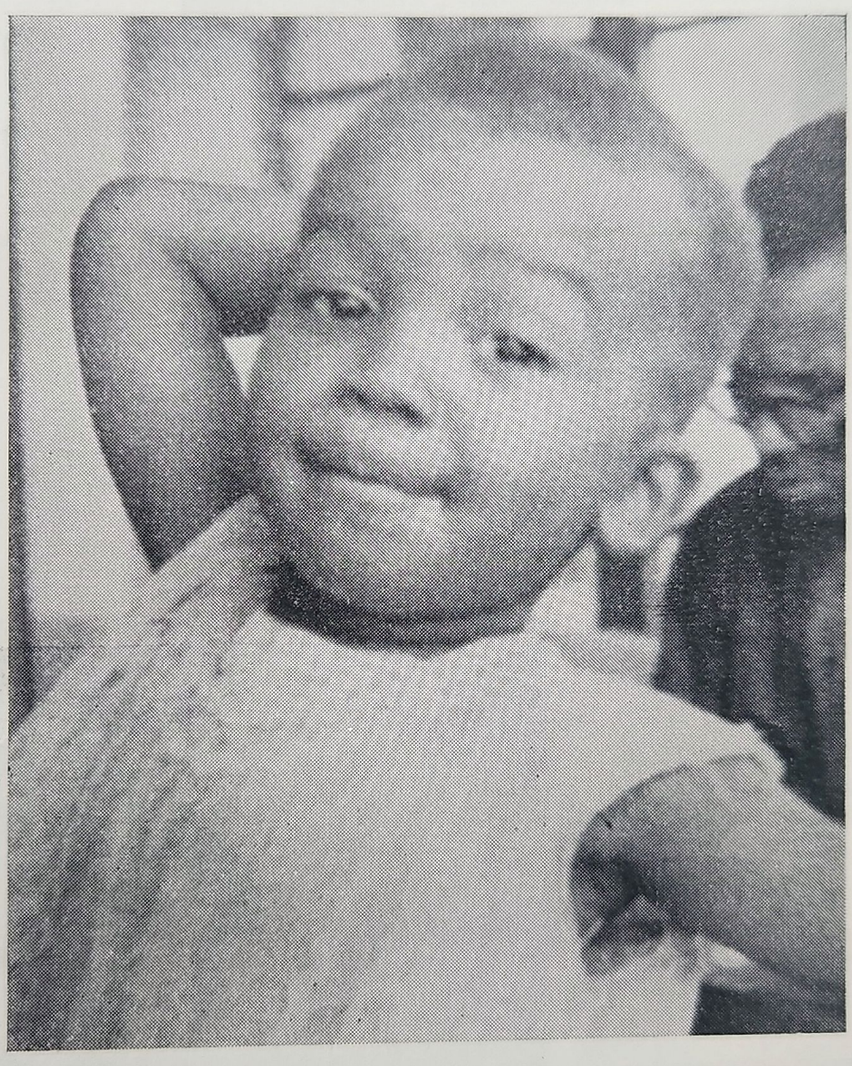
That every Bini should from then on live a verminous life of filth and degradation was easy enough; it was easy to live on ripe plantains, bananas, and other fruits for some weeks. Dancing — every-one could go for ten years without seeing a drum! But for each man to be living with two, three or ten wives in the same house and forget nature was far too much — Ewuare or no Ewuare, let alone that it was a strict law laid down by the departed spirits who were certainly more powerful than Ewuare, that every man must perform his duty to his wife, loved or hated, on the first night following end of her menstruation. Unfortunately the white man had not come with his science and contraceptives,

otherwise Oba Ewuare the Selfish alone could have obeyed this law. Chief Uwague was the unlucky man that day! His wife had just ended her menses and she was not the type that could be ignored. Of course he fell and as such things go, Mrs. Uwague missed that period! With unsophistication go honesty. Poor Uwague was in a dilemma: he could not think of telling the Oba that it all happened just a day before he made his memorable Laws — not that it could have made any impression on Ewuare — so his wife had to go into hibernation and was in Uwague's backyard for nine months until she delivered. History did not record that young Master Uwague's mouth was gagged from the hour of his birth, but no one ever heard a baby cry from Uwague's compound.

Meantime in the rest of the City, men had developed dysentery, and all sorts of unbearable Tommy Trouble from a year's eating of over-ripe and unripe fruits, and unable to continue obeying Ewuare any longer, fled to distant farms where they could cook their food without the smoke being seen by Oba Ewuare's agents, or the irresistible smell of cooked or roasted meat floating into their nosy nostrils! At first they trekked tens of miles to go and cook their food and returned to the City only to get home not just TIRED but HUNGRY! "Why return to the City at all?" So men in waves began to settle in the farms far away from the City. Others whose wives had become pregnant, to escape the sure and terrible retribution of Ewuare, fled the City. It needs no stretch of imagination to believe that many of the more loyal subjects died of filth and infection. The important thing is that within a few months the Great City was almost empty. Honest Uwague then went to Ewuare and tried to change his hardened mind by his sincerity. "Ghara Omo!" he said, "I have disobeyed you and I know I merit death — but my death will be better than our Great City becoming a mere shell. This boy is my son — the mother was pregnanted after you made the Mourning Laws. If you had forgotten the sad death of Kuoboyuwa, the Edaiken and Ezuwarha of Iyowa and begun afresh with your wives, by now you could have got sons perhaps the age of this boy — but what has followed the Laws? THE CITY IS EMPTY! "What!" exclaimed the great Ewuare — "You mean my subjects dare leave the City?" He sent his stalwarts to summon all the various quarters. On reaching each section of the City and demanding the whereabouts of the house owners, the few remaining answered — "ESAN FUA!" (they have jumped away or they haved fled).

A great number of these people who thus escaped these unjust and selfish Laws formed our ancestors, particularly the founders of Irrua, and to this day the Binis in derision still refer to us as "ESAN NE SAN FUO-HA" (the Ishans who fled into the jungle, and in its most abusive form, an irate Bini means BUSHMAN!).

Ewuare at first tried to bring back the fleeing subjects by force and in many cases, his own men were humiliated by not only being trounced but the supposedly fleeing people returned and plundered the City. He then dug the third moat right in the heart of the City to prevent the few remaining subjects from deserting. This was not enough. His fertile but selfish brain invented another method of arresting the fleeing subjects: he sent word round that at the pain of death or war, no one should give refuge to his deserting subjects who could now be readily identified by the TATTOO he began to inflict on the bodies of all Binis. He sent vassals round and, in some cases, actually went out himself and all those with marks were easily recognised as citizens of the Great Benin and were returned. Thus after Ewuare's time, as all those with these tattoos and tribal marks were easily identified as belonging to the EDO RACE — the then master race in West Africa, Ishans began to subject themselves



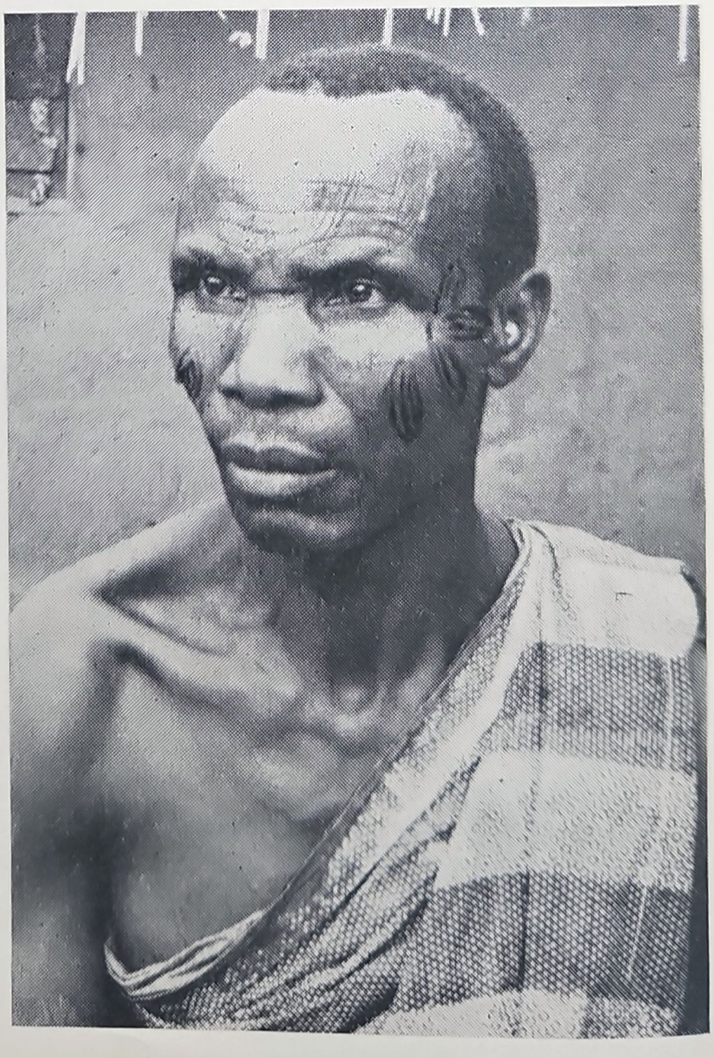
ISI OKOJIE AT TWO YEARS

An Ishan boy shows his innocent face which until two generations ago could have been riddled with the tell-tale tribal marks.

ISHAN FACIAL TRIBAL MARKS

FRONT VIEW: Three Blocks of Marks on each cheek below the eyes.

SIDE VIEW: The Crow's Tail — three divergent marks at the corner of each eye.



to these painful ordeals in foolish imitation, and thus came the tribal markings of abdomen and trunk with facial marks in Ishan.

I have gone into some details regarding the life and happenings at Ewuare the Selfish's reign. It would at first appear that Ishan did not originate until after 1440, when Ewuare imposed his selfishness and wickedness on the great Benin Stool. No, before this time, there were inhabitants scattered in the jungles now comprising Ishan, as evidenced by our own Ishan folklores featuring OGISO — the common name for the Bini Rulers before the advent of the GREAT ORAMIYAN, just as in the same way we have many of our stories featuring ASIJIE (Oba Esijie) and AGUARAN (Aruan-ran) his warring Giant Brother. Long before 1460, that is Ewuare's time, either through the selfishness and atrocities of some of the Obas, or following the catastrophic civil wars over succession, some people deserted the City for the jungle. Often an offending Chief, Warrior, or Prince to escape a sure and fatal punishment, fled often, followed by a few of his servants and sympathisers. In such cases, they had to trek far in an unhealthy jungle with nothing but fruits for food and had to live under circumstances equal to the Oba taking them as dead, that is, they had to live in tiny repressed state so that no one would know or suspect the existence of living people in the area. Such men being fugitives from a cruel foe were bound to lead extremely primitive and apprehensive lives. These were the types of people, banished princes or chiefs, criminal fugitives etc., who inhabited the present Ishan country at the earliest time. For example, the aboriginal people of Ishan are the people of UZEA and EGBELE—UROMI. During the latter part of OBA ẸGBẸKA'S reign, one of his wives called OAKHA, was accused of adultery. For Egbeka who loved no one and had no friends, accusation was as good as the proof: despite the fact that Oakha was blessed with three grown-up sons, Egbeka demanded unfortunate Oakha's head. The sons were ASUKPODUDU, ẸGBẸLẸ, known to some as ỌHỌNSI and to others as ỌMỌNẸ, and ỌGHỌMẸRE, in that order of seniority. They took their father's unkind demand as a challenge and set to work to save their mother from an untimely death. They succeeded in extricating the condemned woman from the impregnable harem and fled the City heading north-east. They were less concerned with where they went — all that mattered was to put a long distance between the avenging and unforgiving hand of merciless Ẹgbẹka, their father, and the life of their loving mother. After months of wandering, the second son Egbele, to whom locomotion was a real torture because of his deformities, urged his brothers to let them stay where they had got to, but the others, knowing the length of the crushing tentacles of the octopus who was their father, were for going further since by their action, they were as guilty as the mother whose life they were trying to save.

As Egbele physically could not continue, the others helped him build a shelter at the spot later known as OTO-EGBELE which is today a quarter in Egbele Uromi. Asukpodudu, bent on saving his mother, went on with Oghomere. At a spot in the jungle, he built his own hut — but Oghomere decided to choose a spot of his own, to the poor mother's sorrow: she had already left poor Egbele all by himself in the jungle and now, Oghomere the most junior and most loved son, wanted to continue to face the odds alone. She decided to follow the young man. Where Asukpodudu built his hut became UZOZOGHAINGHAIN in IDINEGBỌN UZEA, which is thus second in age to Oto-Egbele. The word Uzea was a later name that had origin from the fact that Asukpodudu's descendants could neither be alarmed nor impressed by anything.

The settlement of the third son became ẸKWẸLE-ỌGHỌMẸRE near UGBẸKPẸN in Ekwele Ikhanoba. There, their mother later died and a village, OAKHA, was named after her.

The ancient non-aggression pact between Uzea and Uromi on the one hand and Uzea and Ekwele (now EKPERI) on the other, can be understood. Some mistakingly say Uzea and the whole of Uromi or Uzea and the Ruling Family are related. Uzea's blood affinity is only with Egbele and not with all Uromi or the Ruling Family, which did not leave Benin until after 1460.

Even if the impregnable jungle area they had placed between Benin and themselves was not a sufficient defence weapon against the wrath of the Oba, common sense dictated that these fugitives should lead a quiet and much isolated life for fear of someone detecting them and reporting their whereabouts to the Oba. There is no doubt that the only life possible then was a simple primitive and timid one.

On the contrary, the people who fled the City after 1460 were in many cases strong and disciplined lot, often in large waves able in many cases not only to resist the hardened forces of Oba Ewuare but conquer them. These waves got to the jungles not as tip-toeing fugitives but as superiors, imposing themselves as rulers on the cowardly lot they met and ultimately displacing them further into the jungle or eliminating them entirely. Added to this is the sorrowful trait still noticeable in present day Ishans: their preferential treatment for the stranger: no man is good amongst the Ishans unless he is a stranger. Thus in many instances fleeing Binis reaching an Ishan settlement were acclaimed War Leaders or in some cases Ojie (Kings)! A particularly good single example of this trait is given by UGHULU, who was fleeing from the Oba when he reached EWU with his two younger brothers UAMEN and EKPẸBUA. One of these fugitives was selected to rule Ewu people! This preferential treatment of strangers—always reserving their post of honour for strangers, is also exemplified by the arrival of OMI and his junior brothers ỌKHALE and OKOGUN in Uromi. They were murderers of their monarch at Ewohimi and were fugitives intending to seek shelter in far away IGHALAN. They were stopped at Uromi: everyone of these criminals became heads of the places they fled to! Omi became the great cultural leader in Uromi, and AMẸDẸOKHIAN got named after him. The second brother Okhale was honoured with the title of ONIHA—inferior only to that of the Onojie! The most junior fugitive was made ISỌDỌLE, the big ỌKHAẸMỌN (Chief) of UTAKO!

Practically all the Ruling Houses of Ishan came direct from Benin to rule the people they found, in many cases, already firmly established. There is no argument that many Ishan units existed as inconsequential rather primitive fugitive hide-outs, but the proud and self-reliant Ishans really dated from the large exodus following Ewuare the Selfish's reign.

It is interesting to cite the case of Irrua proper. When they got to the present EGUARE, they had found some settlers, the type I already alluded to, that is, settlers before the great exodus. They imposed their authority on these simple people and ultimately drove them to OPOJI—the remainder are the Founding Fathers of IDUMUNEKHAKPOZI, wedged in between OYỌMỌN Irrua, IDUMEBO and USENU, today.

One of the stories I have been told and confirmed at Irrua, Uromi and Ugboha is that the ancestors of the Ruling Houses of the three places named were brothers who left Benin probably during the Ewuare period. One of the brothers settled at IVUE, while that of Irrua moved on to Eguare Irrua, with the one of Ugboha, deceived by his brother

that he was stopping at Uromi because of stomach trouble, moving on alone in search of water. I have been unable to confirm this story from my research. But it will be wise for the enquirer to be forewarned against interpretation of 'BROTHER' as indiscriminately used by us Africans. To a people whose mode of life is based on KINSHIP, it can mean a Townsman, a trusted Acquaintance or a man from a totally different village but under oath with the speaker. Thus when an elder swears that the founders of the Ruling Houses of Irrua, Uromi and Ugboha, and then Udo, Ugboha, Ubiaja and Emu were brothers, he does not necessarily mean that they had the same father or same mother. For instance while the founder of Ubiaja hailed from Udo in Benin territory, the founder of Ugboha came from Idumu-Igun in Benin City itself. Truly the founder of OHORDUA, ERAKPẸ, was a brother to ORI-ỌMỌN of Emu: yet 'Emu' is no relation to 'Irrua,' who is said to be a BROTHER of 'Ubiaja'! Divorce which made queer relationship possible was unknown in ancient Ishan.

Regardless of what the truth may be the important thing to bear in mind is that before Ewuare died in 1473, the important Ishan towns like URUWA, URONMUN, EKUNMA, EMULU, OWOHA, UBI-AZA etc., had become well organised under self-asserting Ekakulo or War Leaders.

At long last Ewuare saw the futility of continued hostilities with his recalcitrant subjects who had now organised themselves into powerful more or less well run groups. His confusion was beyond description when everybody including those who had deserted Benin for one reason or another as far back as during the Ojiso dynasty began tattooing their bodies and marking their faces, each district later with its own distinctive facial marks — but all really being apeish imitation of the Binis—the superior race! Ewuare reverted to one of the many ways in which he was so adroit: conquest by appeasement! He then invited all the leading Ekakulo to Benin in 1463. Some were suspicious of this wicked and selfish War Lord, while others genuinely through old age or sickness could not make the three to six months' journey to Benin and so sent their junior brothers. In four districts of Ishan, this resulted in a sad occurrence. On reaching Benin, Ewuare the Diplomat, invested all the representatives with the title of ỌNOJIE (plural, ENIJIE), silencing those who faithfully pleaded that they were junior brothers or chamberlains, and sending them back to rule their people dutifully on behalf of himself the Oba. Thus he recaptured the control he had lost by his harshness and callousness. Under Uromi, Ugboha, Emu and Ubiaja the reader will appreciate how this act changed the history of the people.

One could see that through his constant care for his person Oba Ewuare did quite a lot to alter the history of the Edos with particular reference to the Ishans. He is thus the first Oba to create Enijie. After this smart dealing with the hitherto hostile and recalcitrant subjects, he was able to live in comparative peace as much as Benin history would allow, and to be able to devote more time to another great interest of his: Magic and Medicine. He travelled to Irrua where he got the famous medicineman OGAN, now deified in EKHUAE in Benin City. In his selfishness he wanted all that was best for himself; he snatched medicine-men from areas around and similarly enticed all great warriors to Benin, *e.g.* the Great ENỌWẸ of Ugboha.

10. Language:

The common tongue is ESAN which is a dialect of Bini. Even among present day generation speaking Bini may be difficult but it is

The Proud and Assertive Type: An Ishan Okhaemon in the old traditional dress consisting of a big hand-woven cloth. Round the neck is an expensive necklace of Ivie (coral beads), and on the shoulder is the Izakpa (fly swatter). He is wearing a replica of the soft cloth cap which also served as a storage place for kolanuts, tobacco and snuff.

Of such proud stuff were men of the OKHIRENATA Grade made.

An Ishan IGENE wearing the Traditional UBUNUKU.

unnecessary for an Ishan to learn it before understanding it. It is easier for an Ishan to understand Bini — the original tongue, than Ora or Kukuruku language either of which has suffered further inflexion.

Though we all speak Esan, there are slight variations in different clans of the Division, but the most blended or less pronounced is the IRRUA DIALECT. It is quite easy to recognize the Ugboha man or a man from Ubiaja, Uromi, Ekpoma, Ewohimi etc., by his spoken word. When an Irrua man speaks, to another Ishan one thing is certain: the speaker is certainly not Uromi, not Ubiaja, not Ekpoma, not Ewohimi, but there is no doubt that he is speaking Esan! Ugbegun and Opoji speak Ekpoma dialect; Igueben the youngest of the important Ishan districts, till this day still speaks Bini. Ekpon is bilingual — speaking Ishan and Eka.

11. Tribal Traits:

Two types of settlers have been described: the early criminal fugitives, who took every arrival from Benin as an avenging hand of the Oba's retributive justice and were only too willing to yield place for the new-comer or put themselves at their mercy, were quickly displaced by the larger wave of victorious and unrepentant rebels against Oba Ewuare the Selfish. These latter settlers were the real progenitors of present day Ishans. Any wonder then that the Ishans, as a race, are proud even up to the point of being arrogant, self-confident, vindictive and wearing glasses transparent only to envy and snobbishness! They are fatalist and this gives them ready explanation for their failures: "I failed in this project not because I had not done my best or known how to do it; must be that's how God wanted it!" Given a chance, they are brainy, forthright and easily assert leadership in any community.

You cannot lead an Ishan man. Convince him that movement is necessary for his progress, then let him make a move and you exploit the momentum!

The key to a people's history and trait is to be found in their music, dances and folklores. If that is so, take a look at two typically Ishan dances — AGBEGA and OBỌDỌIRIBHẸFE and you will see what a proud race the Ishans are. Their vivaciousness and the fact that they descended from warlike ancestors can be seen in the commonest Ishan dance — JUJU Dance (EGBABỌNẸLIMIN), OLẸKẸ, OHOGHO etc. ASONO combines both the proud movements and agile figures of a Warrior.

Whether it is an inheritance from the first inferiority complexed settlers or from the arrogance of the second set, one amazing trait in the Ishan people stands out clearly. It is their preferential treatment for strangers and their hero worshipping. There is nothing grossly wrong with this but what is sorrowful is that the Ishans do not believe there can be a hero from amongst themselves. Their argument as it were even to this day is "If that man is a hero — then he cannot be an Ishan." This is to be expected from the descendants of a people who in those days were not only able to resist the mighty Oba Ewuare, but to beat him at his own game and later came to think that they are all equally good and equally great. The true picture then is external arrogance with inferiority underneath. A few examples?

(*a*) In Ishan custom every child is given a name, and each name has a meaning, which may give a short insight into the father's, mother's or family history. But in modern Ishan, people, Christians and pagans alike, prefer foreign names whose meaning they do not know. For example, take a man whose name is Ẹhikioya; he later takes a white man's

IF IT IS OLEKE — call EKPON!
The Trumpeter calls the Tune.

name, 'John' and refers to himself as John Ẹhikioya. His son's name is, Isiramẹn, who on growing up selects another white man's name for himself, *e.g.* James. Actually this boy's name before the white man came would have been Isiramen Ehikioya—but if today one were to ask him for his name, he would with alacrity say, "James John." On the contrary the Ibos or the Yorubas prefer their native names to the foreign ones they get at Baptism or later in life.

(*b*) On several occasions I have met Ishan families in Lagos or Hausaland, who took pride in telling me their children do not understand Ishan. At home, they would rather speak Yoruba or Hausa to their children than use their native tongue of which they appear to be ashamed. Some even go so far as to give Yoruba or Ibo names to their children and in some cases, the result is pathetic! What of such names as Aburo, Anti (Yoruba way of calling aunt) or Idio (D.O.) Emusi (Master of Ceremonies) etc.!

(*c*) It would be gross injustice on Ishans to say they had no form of dress before the advent of the white man. Despite the impact of civilization, the Yorubas have preserved their traditional way of dressing. Ours was discarded not because of its primitiveness, but because of the Ishan trait of preferring anything foreign. Looking at people in an Ishan street today, they could pass for Yorubas or Hausas judging by dress alone.

(*d*) In 1932 the study of Ishan language was introduced into schools and I very well remember the hue and cry of parents protesting against paying hard cash for their children to go and learn ESAN! But today the Ibo or Yoruba child can offer Ibo or Yoruba as one of his subjects for the Senior Cambridge Examination, and with pride too.

(*e*) The argument I overheard sometimes ago is illustrative. Two young men were arguing over which of two tailors they should give their knickers to build. I will use A and B to avoid embarrassment. The stronger-voiced boy preferred tailor B to A. After a prolonged argument, the quieter boy said—"How do you think B could be better than A? Don't you know B is Ishan?" What struck me in the argument was not the quieter boy's reason for preferring A who was Ibo, but the apparent conviction the revelation brought to the stronger boy—for on hearing that his favourite was after all Ishan, he succumbed with, "O! Ho!"

(*f*) Ask most Ishan men in Lagos where they come from and they would automatically say, "Benin," not because they feel the enquirer would not know where Ishan is but because they do not want to appear as men from the BUSH! An Asaba man in Lagos would never say he came from Benin—at least he understands what the enquirer wants is fact and not history of origin!

One could go on *ad nauseam* giving examples to show that the Ishans, while worshipping heroes, believe that all Ishans are created equal and so more readily acknowledges heroism in the foreigner.

So much for the whole tribe except to say that as a whole, the Ishans despite their origin are pacifists—sincerely averse to force, riots and strikes.

Individually they make interesting study. Sweet or bitter, the truth should be spoken. The Uromi people have a strong force of unity, are deeply political, keen traders and though at one-time a few bad people had tried to besmear their good name by persistent stealing, the people are sociable, hard-working, healthy competitors and today, Uromi has become the trade centre around which a thick population is growing in Ishan. Ekpoma people are sly, cunning, deep thinking and non-com-

mital. You could not know an Ekpoma man so well as to know what exactly he might be thinking. They are the proudest Ishans. ẸBHOAKHUALA, a district in Ekpoma, typifies the first trait. You see an Ẹbhoakhuala man obviously on his way to the farm and you ask him, "Are you going to the farm?" The answer you would get is, "Eh—not exactly, but it might turn out that I touch the farm before evening." Now you could not accuse him of lying, if an hour after you were to find him sweating in his farm; at the same time he had not owned up to you that HE WAS GOING to his farm! Oh! How many trusting visitors or even Administrative Officers have been caught with the non-commital answer after a long speech asking them to do something: "We hear; we shall discuss the matter you have raised with OUR PEOPLE and let you have an answer!" And before the visitor might be all the 'OUR PEOPLE!'

The second Ekpoma trait of pride is typified by the people of Illeh—a village wedged in between Ewu, Irrua and Ukhun. In Illeh all men are born equal: "Yi—aaah! Does he feed me in my house? No? Then he cannot tell me that!" And that means before God and man he is equal to the man he is referring to. That man might be the very Onojie of Ekpoma!

The Irrua people are the open-hearted, pleasure-seeking litigants of the area. They have a high sense of humour, are fluent, quick witted and in an Ishan expression, "If they tell you what you are seeking is buried in the ground—please search for it on the ceiling!" Unlike the more serious people of Ekpoma and Uromi who easily divide into Warring Camps, an Irrua man is the perfect, ambivalent Fence Sitter. You never could tell to which side he belongs! Reliability?—Yes! But at your own risk! They can take an oath on the most terrible juju and still get away with it! A story is told of a time when all the Ishan Enijie went to see the Oba who gave them a boxful of costly Coral Beads. On their return they all made a night at the OJIRRUA'S and next morning on demand, the Ojirrua brought the box half-full with Coral Beads: he had secretly buried the other half in the spot where the beads were to be shared. The suspecting Enijie were furious—so much so that they were prepared to break one of the Ishan customs. "If you—Ojirrua—deny this was not all the beads the Oba gave us yesterday, swear on a given juju." The Ojirrua was too willing to exonerate himself by swearing. All the smoking quick-killing jujus were hastily assembled and the great Ojirrua went down on his knees and took the oath: "If I took any of these beads—except these here in the ground of course—may all these flaming jujus burn me alife!" And he got up with every Onojie apologising for accusing him falsely! They shared what was left of the beads and he got a lion's share even of that too!

The Ubiaja people are the music and dance loving care-free people of Ishan, with an abiding affection for the keg of palm wine. The Ugboha people are artistic, beautiful singers, very sympathetic, fear-to-offend type; listen to them speak, all their sentences ending in a plaintive question note. For example, you gave an Ugboha woman 50 kolanuts to keep, and for the past five days you had been going to her for ten a day: you went there on the sixth day for more. Where many other Ishans would have received your latest and apparently irresponsible demand with —"Hell!—How many kolanuts did you give me to keep?"—the Ugboha person would quietly ask, "Ọma yẹ bho fo—la? (Aren't they finished —OR)." On the other hand the Ugboha people are uniformly very superstitious and clouded with the fears for witches and wizards. You will find many a zinc house, built at considerable personal sacrifice, deserted

with their owners living in huts nearby because the houses have been be-witched!

The majority of the people in Ishan 'B' are simple, sincere hard-working people, who until in recent times, the rest of Ishan thought they could continue to exploit forever. They are rapidly coming unto their own. The Ewohimi people are bold and cunning and are strict believer in medicines. Their native doctors are famous and respected all over the Edo speaking Districts. They will sincerely serve anybody until they find him dishonest or unworthy. Deep Ishan 'B' is typified by Ohordua. To Ohordua people the stranger is a liar, a thief, a murderer and, in fact, might be Lucifer personified. But once they come to know the man, their mistrust is replaced with an almost servile attitude. Lead—to hell or heaven, they will ask no further questions—they will follow.

The Igueben people are compassionate and slow to anger. If an Igueben greets you while you are on a sick bed you will "take up thy bed and walk!" Or if you give him something and he thanks you, the voice pronouncing the 'EBILU—u—u' will sound so sincerely thankful that you will give him what you have left in your hands! The humbliest and most honest people of the Division are to be found in Ewu.

The reader will surely miss the boat if he takes up an individual person in his mind to check these individual clannish traits here described. Education and environment readily alter them. To catch what I mean, meet the people in their own surroundings!

12. Distinguishing Features:

(*a*) *Clothes:* Ishan men had two forms of dress. One consisted of a large native cloth of three pieces sewn together, which was thrown across the body over the left shoulder, like a toga. Underneath and round the waist was a smaller piece of cloth tied tightly at the back. The more elderly ones wore a soft cloth cap, and on the left shoulder, was an IZAKPA usually made from teased leather or from a cow's tail. Round the neck the Onojie or Okhaemon, or a well-to-do man, wore a long necklace of coral beads. The second and simpler type of dress consisted of yards of cloth tied round the waist, leaving the chest bare. This was the UBUNUKU which long, long ago went out of fashion like the women's one piece dress consisting of a cloth tied round the breasts and extending to just above the ankles. Ever since, the Ishans imitated any dress of any visitor, or of any tribe that they liked. Young girls and boys up to the age of puberty wore nothing; the girls had many strings of the highly inflammable beads called OKPONO round their waists.

(*b*) *Hair Styles:* The Ishans had different methods of making their hair. It all depended upon the age, the sex and the occasions. Up to the first half of the 19th century, the men particularly of nobler births plaited their hair. The OHEN (juju priests) left their hair in long curls (ỌGBIHIAGHA), while those above middle age shaved all the scalp except a small island left on the occipital area which was plaited and an EKAN Bead tied to it. The women of course, had as many hair styles as there were occasions!

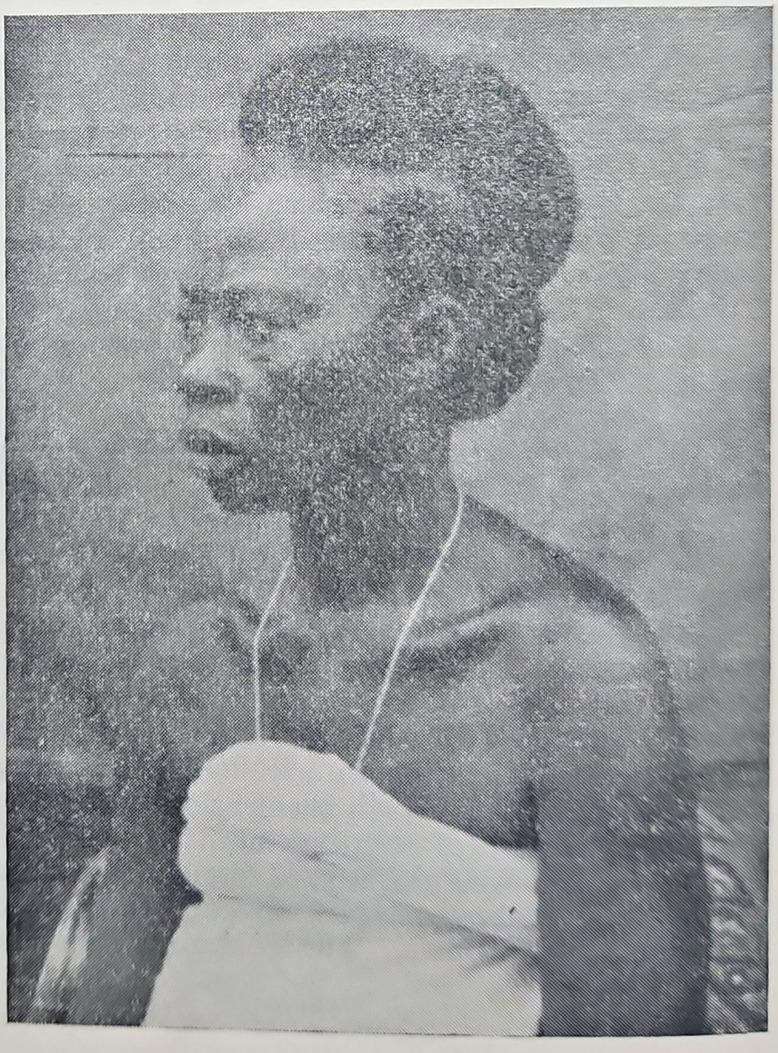
(*i*) *IKPODODO:* As a girl from about five to puberty she dyed her hair orange after curling with IKPODODO, and as the curls hung over her face, she had to brush them aside to have a look. This protected her from the gaze of admirers until she came of age!

(*ii*) *ETUKE (Eto-Uke):* Usually after circumcision and reaching the husband's home, the girl stopped using Ikpododo and did her hair like full-grown women. The commonest style was that of ETUKE,

HAIR STYLES

ETO IKPODODO

worn by girls before coming of age. It shields the bashful girl from the gaze of young men!



ETUKE : The traditional hairdo of women of rank.
This is the five-piece style.

which consisted of five pieces in all: three heaps longitudinally and one on each temporal area. Adding height and dignity to women, it was the favourite hair-style of women of rank — like Onojie's wives.

(*iii*) *OJIETO* (*The King of Hairs*) was the ceremonial post-circumcision hairdo for virtuous girls. It is only seen today in Uzea area. It is a complicated affair of beauty making use of beads and old silver coins. Those who did not have hairs long enough made use of artificial hairs from dyed fibres.

(*iv*) *ETO-OMO:* This was the traditional hairdo for mothers from the 14th day of delivery to five days before the ceremonial Hair Washing (IHỌETO) and Naming Ceremony. That meant that it was worn for about three months. It consisted of five pieces woven like native tobacco coils. These were covered with EKASA, (Yellow Soap) before the decorative imprints. In modern time only in Uromi district is the ETO-ỌMỌ still of significance. It is now made a day before Uromi market, soaped the next morning and the woman goes to show off at the market. Her relatives and friends follow shouting her praise and praising God for her safe delivery while some give her monetary presents, others demand money from her for joining in praising her. This Eto-Omo with the Ekasa was the necessity for the Hair Washing on the day of the Naming Ceremony. Sometimes the mother herself did not make the hair — her mother or guardian wore the hair-style on her behalf.

(*v*) *ETO-OKUKU* was the hair-style of unmarried women of rank — like daughters of Onojie, Ekhaemon and rich men. Today all that it signifies is that it is the hairdo of the younger wives of a wealthy and aged man, on his death. It is only made now at Burial Ceremonies. On the 4th day of the burial ceremony, that is, ỆDIZỆLỆ or ỆDỆỌWỌ, if the ceremony began on the 1st day of the farming week, the women of the deceased man and the wives of his children assembled in the evening and in the midst of dancing, had their hair done in ETO-OKUKU, which consisted of one long piece tied together at the top with a parrot's red feather. It denoted the longevity of the dead man, and his wealth, for the more wives that took part at this ceremony, the wealthier he was taken. Only women whose first babies survived were entitled to plait this hair for another. The chief celebrant or heir of the dead man gave each of the women taking part a white head-tie with which the Eto-Okuku was tied. For the next seven days they received special and preferential treatments — no sleeping in dirty and unrubbed houses, no eating of soup without meat, no load carrying, no servile work, and in fact for them it was seven days of dignified life. On the seventh day, the hair was undone by the presentation of a basket of seven yams to each of the women, by the heir.

(*vi*) *HAIRDO OF A WIDOW*: This was the simplest, humiliating and sorrowful: she must shave off all the hair of her scalp. Thus it is strictly forbidden for a married woman to shave her scalp otherwise.

(*c*) *Tribal Marks:* There were two types: Facial and Body Tattoo. Tribal facial marks consisted of the CROW'S FOOT at the outer angle of each eye, called ABELAMẸN, and three longitudinal marks on the cheeks below each eye. The body tattoo was also fairly uniform. Easy identification which made Oba Ewuare the Selfish introduce tribal marks about 1462, led the Ishans to mark their faces. At war, in slavery and on the road people from the same area easily recognized themselves and were thus able to assist themselves or prevent fatal mistakes. The body tattoo was at first an imitation of the Binis — because after Ewuare's time, anyone who had not the tattoo could not gain an entrance to the Oba's Palace, since he could not have been a Benin man. Everybody then

HAIR STYLES

ETO-OKUKU MAKING at a Burial Ceremony in Ekpoma

ETO-OKUKU: Originally the hair style of Princesses and well-to-do women, it is now the ceremonial hairdo of wives of a wealthy man and his children during the funeral ceremonies.

wanted to be mistaken for a member of the Master Race and so Ishans began to tattoo their abdomen and trunks. But later, it became a sign of good and noble birth in the males, and in women, it showed 'Coming of Age.' It was considered as rape to seduce a girl who had not yet had these marks. The tattooing were ceremoniously done, by age set in the males, and just before marriage in the females.

Each tribe had its own form of initiation into manhood and marks of distinction. Manhood is associated with not just height and girth but with dignity and ability to bear pain and suffering without any outward signs. To the Ishans nothing can be more undignifying than tears flowing from the eyes of a man, come what may. Thus a man wishing to be taken as having become fully of age, must have to undergo the pain of tattooing.

On this day, which for the man was a day of inward torture, but for the family, one of rejoicing, there was dancing and singing while the surgeon (ỌWẸNA) performed the tattoo consisting officially of parallel and longitudinal marks, each about half an inch wide. In the male, there were five: one from each shoulder down across the breast to the waist; a central piece ran from the top of the breast bone over the navel to the lower part of the abdomen. At the back, a similar mark ran from behind each shoulder to the waist line. In the female, there were ten: a pair ran from the front of each shoulder down the side of the chest to the waist line; one mark ran from the root of the neck across each breast to the waist line. At the back a pair of marks ran from behind each shoulder to the waist. After the multiple incisions which were skin deep, a black or colouring stuff was rubbed into them and the burning which followed could not be imagined by one who had not undergone the ordeal: yet the man, wanting to prove how much he deserved to be a He-man from then on, led in the singing. If he showed more than a flinch of the eye-brows with each stroke of the triangular knife, not to talk of people having to hold him, he was not yet a man. The braver he behaved the prouder the family, the louder the singing and the bigger the feasting that followed.

In the olden days these marks on a man showed that:—

(1) He was of a noble birth.
(2) He had attained proud manhood and could be trusted.
(3) He was not a slave and therefore,
(4) He was a fit and proper person to enter any palace, including that of the Oba!

Male members of the Royal Family and from the family of titled men, had the full marks which every Edo had—that is, the five marks. For the rest of free Ishans, the marks were three: one on each side in front with the central diamond.

ETO-OKUKU as originally worn in our City of origin. Adorning the hair are hairpins and round her neck are necklaces of expensive Coral Beads.

What was unthinkable in 1897 — Whites and Blacks sitting together in the Bloody City of Benin — became a common place affair in 1956.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

THE whole structure is based on KINSHIP, the smallest social unit being UẸLẸN. This consists of a man, his wives, children, junior brothers, his yet unmarried sisters and any other such persons as his mother and servants. When the junior brothers grow up and get married, they build their own houses round that of this man, which was their father's house before death. This man is the Kingpost of the whole structure and I name him outright for easy reference. He is the ỌMIJIOGBẸ (AKHẸOA, in Ishan 'B'). As the brothers' own families start to multiply it is easy to see this man's position as Head of the Family increasing in importance. He speaks for that unit and takes charge of the Ancestral Shrine.

Several such units form IDUMU, and many of this or a large Idumu forms ẸGBẸLE. It is unsafe to translate Egbele as QUARTER, because an Idumu could also correctly mean a Quarter. The important thing to note is that all members of Egbele descend from a common father or ancestor. Depending on the size and the genealogy of an Idumu, lovers are not permissible. In both Egbele and Idumu intermarriage is not allowed.

Many Egbeles make a village and where they are not members of a single patrilineage, marriage is permissible. Strangers cause the greatest complications in this system. They are admitted as residents but not assimilated so that as their own families start to grow within a small unit as Uelen, one might be surprised after all I have said above, to find members of an Idumu marrying each other. On close study however, it will be seen that the marrying sets are no patrikins. The standing law is that no couple who can trace any relationship paternally or maternally to an Omijiogbe can marry despite the loose talk that "things are not forbidden towards a mother's origin."

The Head of the village is the ỌDIỌNWELẸ, the oldest man in the village. This needs qualification. If a stranger comes to settle in a village and in his lifetime comes to be the oldest man in that village he could not be the Odionwele. His family must have existed long enough in that village to lose all the identities of a stranger. He needs not be an Omijiogbe.

In a typical Ishan village the social system tries to regulate, sometimes in a manner which to a stranger may appear puzzling, the physical and spiritual needs of the whole community. An Ishan is more of a part of the whole and less a mere number.

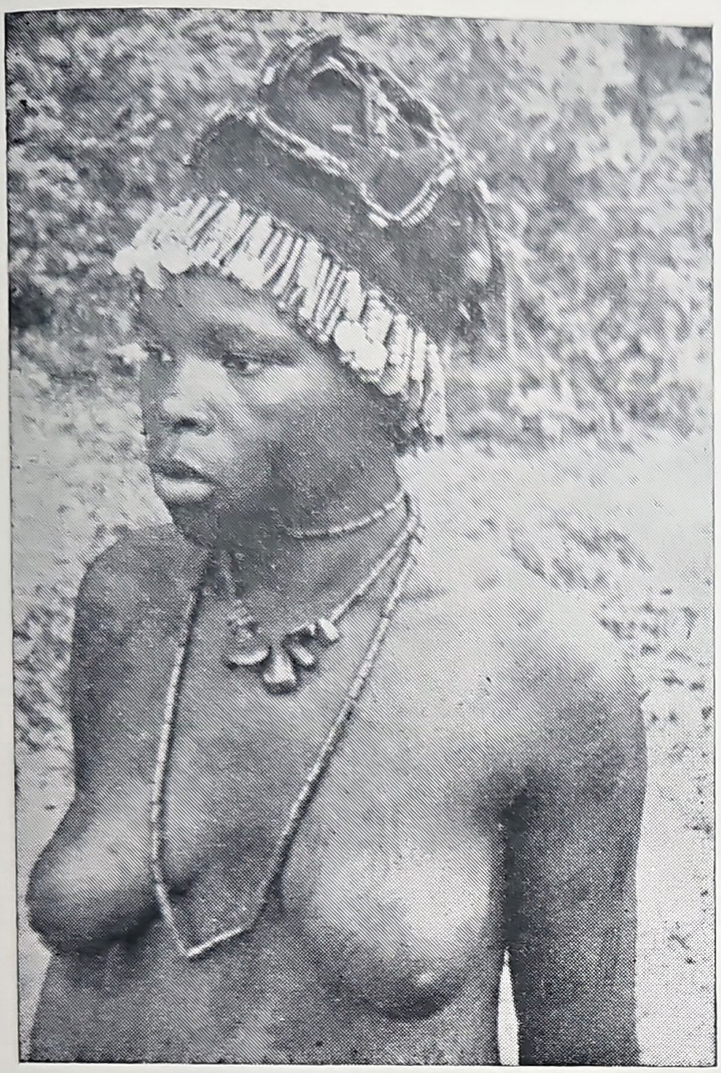
1. (a) Age Grades and Sets: Under the Odionwele is a tripartite division of the male members of the village. These are:—

(i) The EDIỌN (the elders) — these are men of over 45 in age.

(ii) IGENE—men of 35 — 45. In some parts this age grade is known as IGBAMA or OBỌIGBAOTỌ or OKUOKHIMIOTỌ or ỌKHIRẸNATA. All these names appropriately mean that this grade consists of men beyond the age of being frightened but not too old to be physically handicapped by senility: in other words they were the men of war.

(iii) EGBỌNUGHELE: — Males of 12—35.

A political group — the Ekhaemon or men given titles by the Onojie, are in the senior grade, but in the village they have no direct voice at the Edion's deliberation.

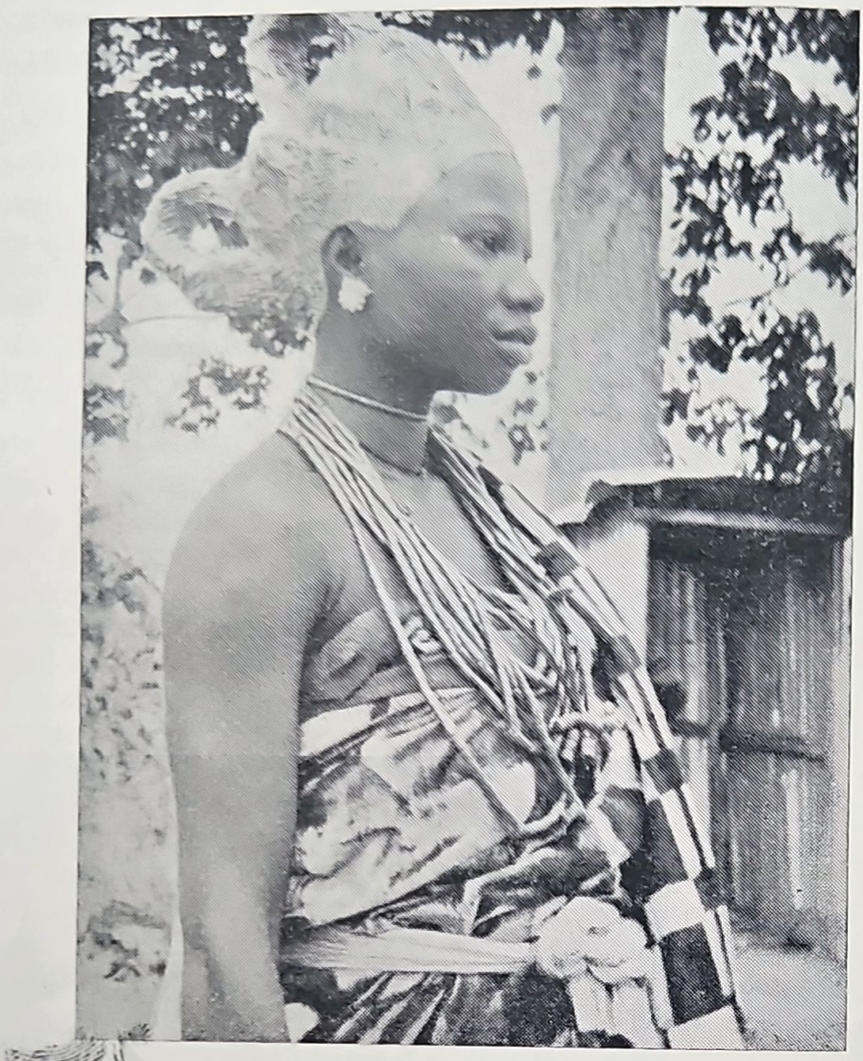


HAIR STYLES

Post-circumcision HAIRDO (OJIETO). Only those who were Virgo Intacta on coming of age had the honour of having this Proud Hairdo. Round the neck and on the hair are coral beads of all grades.

ETO-OMO

(a) *Before the application of Ekasa: shows the details of the style.*



(*b*) *After Ekasa:*
Eto-Omo was the traditional hairdo of mothers for the first three months after delivery. The hair is done up in Ekasa — yellow soap and the coral beads round the neck are worth about £30. *At each corner of the eyes and on the forehead are round chalk spots — a sign of recent delivery.*

(b) Duties: The Odionwele is the supreme head, socially and religiously in all matters affecting the village. He with the next three Edion form EDIỌNENẸ. Meetings affecting the elders alone are held in the Odionwele's house usually, but bigger meetings are held in the Village Square at the OKOUGHELE (village hut).

The Edion or elders form the village council dealing with crimes involving native laws and custom, e.g. adultery, bad medicines, disobedience likely to disrupt the village etc. Serious offences like stealing, murder, rape etc., are sent onto the Onojie through the Okhaemon (plural, Ekhaẹmọn). The Edion have messengers (UKỌ-EDIỌN) and spokesmen. The spokesmen, usually two, are usually selected from the brightest in their grade, while the two IKỌ (messengers) may be selected from Igene, and from then on, attend all Edion meetings. These may also serve as EGHAEMIN — responsible for sharing gifts or booties accrueing from fines, seizures etc. All the elders have big walking sticks called ỌKPỌ, but it is usually the Odionwele's and those of the senior three, that is, Ediọnenẹ, that are more correctly referred to as ỌKPỌ. Suspects to clear them of the alleged crimes swear on the Edionene's Okpo. All who have entered this senior grade in the official way, that is, by proper entrance (ILỌDIỌN) can be buried respectfully. All Edion are exempted from public duties, such as Communal Labour. Irrespective of age, an Omijiogbe who has performed the burial ceremony of his father and adults who have performed the expensive Clothing Ceremony are in this senior grade; so too are the Juju Priests.

The Igene grade is normally not called for public duties unless such duties are beyond the next lower grade. Its members head such major works as house building or roofing and are really the dare-devils of the village community — being called upon when there is a serious matter or incident like outbreak of fire, night burglary etc., hence the very suitable Ekpoma name ỌKHIRẸNATA (not yielding to settlement or yielding place to none). They bury the dead and head the junior grade in digging of ponds.

EGBỌNUGHELE (street sweepers) are the carriers of water and hewers of wood for the village. Their most well known job is that of cleaning and sweeping the Village Square (UGHELE), which is usually done once in four days. They clean the roads half-way to the next village, that is, to the common OKOVẸN. They are responsible for a major part of communal labour in the village and only get help from the Igene when the job is really too much for them; this is usually on appeal to the Edion who instruct the Igene to go to their assistance. Boys join this grade as soon as they are strong enough, usually from 10—12 years of age and leave it between 29—35.

2. Meetings:

Each grade has its own meetings and even where a matter is so serious as to merit a general meeting, each grade sits and deliberates apart. The Iko or messengers of each grade make reports to the senior grade. Thus in a big village meeting the Edion and all those entitled to sit with them like Ekhaemon and Omijiogbe, sit together — but neither an Okhaemon nor Omijiogbe who is there merely by virtue of his family importance only, can initiate a discussion. The Igene sit apart from the Egbonughele. The Edion then give their decision after everybody has had the liberty of shouting himself hoarse or until believed; this decision is conveyed by their Iko to the Igene, who, in turn, give their own decision based on that received from the senior grade to the street sweepers.

EHIABHI — The ODIONWELE of all UROMI. Unbelievably agile, by calculation, he is put at about 110 years. As the oldest man of the greatest concentration of population in all Ishan (Uromi, about 40,000), he is possibly the oldest man in Ishan.

At the time this photograph was taken there was an inconclusive struggle for the really proud Odionwele position of All Uromi between Ehiabhi of Afuda, Ebhoyi, and Adungbanyan of Ubierumu. Adungbanyan, when I interviewed him, was "sans teeth, sans eyes" and partially deaf and was considerably more feeble than Ehiabhi. To me as a Doctor, Ehiabhi is about 95-100 and Adungbanyan about 95.

AKHAREYI — the ESON of the Late Momodu of Irrua's Harem. Only amongst the Royal Family was there anything near organized Women Association. The Harem had a system of government like that of Eguare. Their ruler was the Eson, the Onojie's first wife.

In Ebelle area, the Eguare daughters, married and unmarried, were organized and called EDAN. Their head was called Ojie-Edan.

These may revolt against the Igene if they feel unfairly treated and report the matter to the Edion for a final ruling.

Each grade maintains discipline amongst its members by fines and seizures of fowls. The Edion, in their dignity, seize goats. Whatever is thus seized can be redeemed by begging or payment of an amount not necessarily up to the cost of what had been seized. Where the reason given for the omission or commission is cogent and a sincere apology rendered, both fines and the animals seized can be foregone.

This tripartite age grade is the easiest and most universal in Ishan, but there are other organizational set-ups which for strangers are so complicated that it is better they have died out. I will mention them for the purpose of history only.

OTU: In every village all over Ishan, there is an age set called OTU to which every man belongs. It takes three Ishan years (which really equals two years since Ishans do not talk of two years ago, but 'last year,' then 'three years ago' etc.), to organise an Otu: this means that all children born within a period of two years belong to the same Otu. Thus Egbonughele may consist of six Otu or age sets.

This Otu or age set is quite different from what used to be called INOTU. This consisted of all the strong able-bodied and courageous elements of the town and were called upon when there was Murder, or fatal accidents like a wall falling on people, the Lintels of the wall being 'arrested' by the Inotu and carried to the Onojie as they would do to a murderer.

Another form of organisational grouping died out with the tribal wars. These represented the Centre, right and left flanks of the Army.

(i) (a) OKHIODẸ.
(b) OBERUAN.
(c) OBIYỌN, in that order of seniority.

If a man was in Okhiode group, his first son would join him there, while his second son goes to Oberuan and the third son to Obiyon. By this grouping, the fourth son would be in Okhiode and would thus be in a senior set to his brothers who really were his elders at home. The three sets, Okhiode, Oberuan and Obiyon together were called OBỌIGBAOTỌ. Remember that in the tripartite grouping a man is still Egbonughele until he is between 29 and 35 by which time he will be having children, perhaps with him as street sweepers.

(ii) From this Oboigbaoto another group was selected called OTUNEA; they were the hot-heads of the village and maintained all the Marshal Laws. Once a man had been selected to this group he ceased to be Egbonughele.

(iii) Igene and
(iv) Edion with their ancillary arms — Ekhaemon, Omijiogbe and Priests.

Either for simplicity or because the other complicated groupings were necessary for wars, the tripartite group of Edion, Igene and Egbonughele has stuck on and is readily understood by everyone in Ishan.

3. Entrance:

There is no formal entrance to become Egbonughe which is a troublesome and laborious age group. The boy is just sent for by the Odion Egbonughe, and asked to come out with his broom! When people feel that the Odion Egbonughe, who is an important figure in the Village, ought to yield place to another, and he successfully appeals to the Edion for promotion, he is retired with all those who are his OTU (same age set). That is, if he is 35, all those who are say, 29—35 are "kicked

upstairs" that year to become Igene. In fact, their leaving is no loss to the Egbonughe because these upper segment people have been for years just overseers! Their loss gives room for the next set of seniors to enjoy supervisory capacities. A simple ceremony usually follows their leaving the group. They cook food with plenty of meat and with kolanuts, feast the Igene who they are going to join.

The position of Edion being that of honour and responsibility, one leaves Igene grade to join them either by doing something important in the Village, e.g. performing the expensive Clothing Ceremony, or burying his father with a cow as he must do if he is an Omijiogbe, or inheriting the priesthood of one of the Village deities. But the most universal method in Ishan custom is for the man to join the Senior Grade of Edion formally: by a special ceremony. On the day he performs this ceremony known as ILỌDIỌN, the applicant takes a large basket of Coconuts, two big chalked calabashes of Palm Wine, a large number of kolanuts and ELAMẸA (2,800 cowries). At the Okoughele, if his gifts are acceptable, he kneels and he is blessed by the Edion who cover his body with chalk. The Odionwele or his representative calls him seven times but he does not answer until the seventh time when he gets up; he is then given the laws of dignity and responsibility, e.g.:—

i. From now on it is your duty to uphold all the dignity of Man, no defalcation anywhere else besides a Latrine, 'count ten' before you curse and, in fact, it is derogatory to allow your hair to stand on end in public, etc.
ii. It is your unqualified duty to settle any dispute between man and wife.
iii. Idleness is a sin for it is the idle man who lies and commits adultery while all the men are away in the farms.
iv. You must not side-track any branch you find falling across the farm path, etc.

In jubilation the new entrant goes home to make merry amidst shooting of guns: he has cause to be, for he is now one of the rulers and most respected members of the Village.

The coconuts are shared by the Edion as follows: 30 for the Edion, 20 for Igene and their underlings—the Egbonughe, and 7 for the Eghaemin.

4. Women Association:

Without self-deceit the Ishans in every sphere of life maintain that there is no place for the woman in society. Thus women have no recognized associations. Even if there is a meeting of women in the village only the recognized married women attend. To be recognized as a wife in the village (OKHUO-IDUMU), on arrival in the village, she must have the other women in the compound perform the ceremony of getting her cooking place 'registered'. The women, after a simple feasting, make the new wife (OBHIỌHA) cook in a newly built cooking place (ẸRIU-U), and the ceremony in Ekpoma area is called IRẸ KE (To prop up your cooking pot). After this, any new wife coming to the village, whether she be grown up already or not, is junior to this woman. Thus the seniority of women in the community is not by birth age, not even by age of arrival in the village but by the order in which they performed the Irẹ ke ceremony.

Should a woman lose her husband by death and she should remarry by inheritance in the same village, she loses her rank. Even if she was the most senior she now becomes the most junior woman of the village, thus satisfying the idea in Ishan custom that it is the sacred duty

of every woman to ensure that her husband lives as long as possible: while praying for long life she does not pray that her husband should die before her!

Women usually meet to plan digging of the village pond, to punish an adulterous woman or to curse round the town usually with the name of their genitals, when there is an epidemic or frequent deaths particularly of children. The use of this part of the body to curse someone is very much dreaded and is strictly forbidden for a woman to direct such a curse to her husband.

This cursing of the people who may have hands in the spread of diseases and deaths is done at night with all the married women of the village stripped naked and all the men shut up in their houses. After hearing the characteristic songs and noises of the women, any man foolish enough to be caught outside, must jump into the bush to let the women pass!

5. Chiefs (Ekhaemon):

To this political group belong the intermediary men between the Onojie's Eguare and the village. They are much respected and hence rank with the Edion. This is really a mark of courtesy for apart from delivering messages from Eguare, they cannot initiate a discussion; they talk when their opinion is sought. In matters outside the village, however, like matters leading to or coming from the Onojie, the Odionwele yields place to the Okhaemon. This I think is a better way to explain the comparative influence of Odionwele and the village chief than to say outright that the chief is the greater person or answer as many old men often answered me when I put the question, "In the olden days who really was the boss of the village, the Odionwele or the Okhaemon?" Invariably the elders retorted, "Ah, my boy! Odion creates Onojie and Onojie makes Okhaemon!"

There were two main types of chiefs: Hereditary and those that were merely political 'THANK YOU' by the Onojie, to those who had helped him when he was a prince or during a succession strife. Many, particularly, in more recent times, were overtly created to make money from the recipients. There was a subsidiary type of titles, referred to as PERSONAL TITLES; these referred to the person of the onojie and had the life span of the onojie who conferred them. The best well known in this personal title were the EGBE (Body) and ẸHI (Guardian Angel). They all died with the onojie. On the day the onojie died, the Egbe was killed and used to line the bottom of the Royal Grave; the dead onojie was then lowered into it and the Ehi, after being beheaded was used to seal the grave. The holders of these wonderful titles had freedom limited only by the onojie himself and were understandably respectfully treated at Eguare.

The hereditary titles were patterned on the line of the UZAMA-NIHIRON of Benin, but local custom and in many cases sheer autocracy and corruption, brought some differences so that some of the titles that are not hereditary in Benin are so in Ishan. The worst that has befallen this class of chiefs is that the Ishan Enijie dealt with them as the white man first dealt with the Oba and later, themselves: amputation of power by decentralization! These titled men, who obtained and held their posts by right of birth rather than at the pleasure of the onojie tended to give sounder advice without fear of losing office, as could otherwise have happened when sometimes the onojie took their advice and attitude as an open challenge to his authority and pride.

The Enijie then created their own chiefs, non-hereditary but armed with judicial powers. The Ishan people, like other tribes, respect only the men with judicial power and so came to fear these political appointees more than the hereditary titled men sweating under executive functions. This broke the power of these hitherto influential chiefs and in many cases, the titles lapsed. By the time they were resuscitated people had either forgotten or became hazy not only about the privileges attached to the office but in what quarter or family the titles used to be held.

The Enijie struck another crushing blow at these titles, this time, at their order of merit. The order of merit, when people loved and respected their traditions, was stable and well known, but in more recent times, cashing-in on the ignorance of the general public, the old order is either deliberately confused or arranged according to how friendly or influential the holders are, from the onojie's point of view. The result is today, the holders themselves, torn by the unsteady and unreliable weather-vane of the onojie's recognition, are as ignorant as any enquirer, about their rights, privileges and order of seniority.

As things stood before these onslaughts by the greedy and jealous Enijie, the order of precedence was:—

1. ONIHA.
2. IYASẸRẸ.
3. EZỌMỌ.
4. EDỌHẸN.
5. ỌLỌTỌN.
6. UWAGUẸ.
7. ERO (ELO).

The Oshodin, though of minor rank than these seven, by his peculiar personal duties in the onojie's harem which he supervised, came to be elevated into this category. The Eholo-Nire, which in our City of origin is a high man, is in Ishan unimportant because he has no particular job allotted to him. Similarly the Esogban, Eson and Osuma (Ihama) though are held in high positions in certain parts of Ishan, are non-hereditary and their rank is inflated as the onojie who creates them pleases. The IHAZA'S position in the community came to be enhanced by the fact that he it was in the olden days that had the responsibility of collecting all the tributes that had to be sent to the village whose prerogative it was to purify the GROUND.

Of the hereditary titles therefore, the ones that combined both the executive and judicial powers over the ages, were and still are, the Oniha, the Iyasere and the Ezomo. Each was in charge of a village where his authority could only be questioned by the onojie in a most cautious manner.

THE ONIHA is next in rank to the onojie. When the onojie dies he it is who by tradition assumes the onojie's authority until after the burial ceremonies of the dead onojie and the installation of the new one. This means that for three months he wields authority equal to that of the onojie. He is the official announcer and the chief mourner of the onojie's death. There must be no weeping or showing of any sign that a mishap has occurred at the palace until the end of the third month, when the Oniha arrives and performs the ceremonial announcement: in the night the heir leads the Oniha with a lamp into the harem; all the women are shut up in their houses and at each door the Oniha knocks and asks, "Where is my son?" For an answer the woman opens the door just wide enough to hand over ỌGBỌLỌ (20 cowries). The Oniha's servant collects the money and the party moves on to the next door; and at the end, apparently not knowing the whereabouts of 'his

son,' the onojie, he shouts, "Oh! My son is dead!" This is the signal for the whole population of the entire harem to join in the terrific and throated wail, since each woman wants everybody to take her as the woman who feels the husband's death most. Eguare now knows that their ruler is dead and can cry. Should anybody cry out before this official ceremony within and without the palace the fine is a Goat, payable to the Oniha!

This job done, the Oniha is then given two goats and a young woman as a wife by the heir-apparent; he slaughters one of the goats to declare the harem property of the heir and then goes home. He returns at the end of the Burial Ceremonies to join the Odionwele and the Osukhure and any other, local custom decrees should be present, to install the new onojie.

THE IYASERE'S traditional office was that of Commander-in-Chief of the Warriors. Since it was the bravest man in the community that used to be selected for this post, and bravery is not necessarily a hereditary factor, this post was for a holder's lifetime. A warrior such as the Iyasere was, had the opportunity of collecting slaves, affluence and influence. Thus more than anyone else in the district, he had all the means, courage, wealth, good followership etc., to constitute a challenge to the suzerainty of the onojie; and this is precisely what has always happened between the onojie and the Iyasere in practically every district of Ishan. As a result of several factors such as these, the masses were always behind the only man who could point a finger at the onojie, and saw in him a necessary break to the onojie's steam-roller's exercise of authority. In most cases the Iyasere wisely succeeded in making his son a man to be reckoned with before he died, so that he had only the onojie standing between him and his father's title. Invariably with the considerable influence his father had built round his family and the powerful friends he must have made before he died, it was a walk-over for the son to succeed his father as the Iyasere. Thus over the years by means of dextrous manoeuvres of the Iyasere, the title came to be hereditary in Ishan.

In many places, blinded by the popularity of the post he holds, that of the head of the Common Man, the Iyasere has tried to dominate the onojie and the Oniha — but clearly, by tradition his post is inferior to both.

As explained above, there are many factors leading to present confusion and haziness surrounding the official status and traditional rights of these seven chiefs. In most cases the confusion is deliberately created by the Enijie themselves either through vindictiveness or in some cases through true ignorance. During the cross-checking of materials for this section, when I asked an onojie or a chief to tell me which title was superior to the other e.g., Iyasere and Oniha, he immediately kept quiet for a moment and rather than look back at history, thought of personalities of the present holders and said IYASERE or ONIHA, depending upon which he liked or was more subservient to him. Any enquirer who tries to get information leading to the order of precedence of the titles, from an onojie or title holders themselves, is sure to be trapped!

THE EZOMO, during the Inter-tribal Wars, was second-in-command to the Iyasere and took a more active part in leading the warriors, than the Iyasere who was more of a Director of Operations. With the end of the wars his importance gradually became less. The Edohen, Oloton and Ero were members of the Council of State, which the onojie consulted before making major and constitutional decisions. Finding the members of this Council too tough for his liking, in every district

of Ishan, the onojie turned his back on them and encouraged the lapse of these titles.

THE UWAGUE, by the nature of his office as head of the keepers of the Royal Regalia and Wardrobes, came to assume extraordinary importance in some districts, such as IRRUA, where he does what the Oniha does in the rest of Ishan. He dresses and undresses the onojie for ceremonial occasions, and thus he has come to know him in and out; being so personally close he succeeded in amassing extra rights and privileges for his office.

THE ỌSUKHURẸ was more of a religious leader than anything else; he, up till now, is the chief worshipper of the dead Enijie and the Keeper of the ANCESTRAL SHRINE at the Palace. Since all the traditional rites were tied up with ancestral worship, the Osukhure, as the Custodian of all laws, custom and tradition, had come to be the onojie's trusted and much respected right-hand man. He consulted him before undertaking any ceremonies as the Recorder of all the departed Royal Ancestors. Before the installation of a new onojie, the new man has to be presented to the departed ancestors and the Osukhure must perform the rites at the shrine (ILUỌBO) before he was 'stooled' by the Odionwele of the kingmakers' quarter and the Oniha. By this ritual supremacy amongst the kingmakers a great prestige has been built round the Osukhure who thus was of the rank of the seven traditional title holders.

Today, the office of the Osukhure is nearly defunct, firstly, because, in Ishan only people with judicial powers are respected and, secondly, the spread of Christianity and Mohammedanism dealt the office, which had been left in a moribund state by the OSẸNUWEGBE CULT that came to Ishan in the early twenties, a fatal blow. The importance of the Osukhure is remembered today only when there is succession dispute in a district. Then, by the knowledge which has been handed from one elder to another in the same quarter, he reminds the people of the dignity and foresight of our forefathers who knew what tradition meant.

The office of the Osukhure is not hereditary, but it is held in the same village of the district. Such a quarter usually belongs to the king-makers. The most elderly of the quarter holds the title. In some parts of Ishan the man who performed the rites at the onojie's ancestral shrine was usually a slave since if he made a mistake at an Iluobo, he was automatically killed. After the slave trade the holders in such places came to be the head of the Kingmakers' Quarter.

Most of the non-hereditary titles are merely used by the onojie as a source of income. Originally there was a considerable advantage attached to the position of chiefs, for they were immune from arrests, could not be attacked in war nor were they called upon for communal labour. Even now when many of these advantages no longer exist, titles still sell like hot cakes because of the scrambling to become Court Members which until recently consisted of Ekhaemon! The only titles nobody ever scrambled for were those attached to the onojie's person; these as explained above were mixed blessings to the holders: they were respected, had all they wanted all their lives but they left the world the day the onojie who created them died!

2. Forms of Settlement:

The Ishans are mostly urban in nature but the reasons for the comparative absence of large towns as exists in Ibo and Yoruba areas are excess of land which is free and communal, the comparative tranquillity since the advent of the British, the proud trait of each Ishan man wanting

to be king in his own house or holding as an inalienable right of each man to go to hell in his own way, and strong belief in witchcraft. If a man loses one or two children and suspects that someone in his village has been after him, he shifts to a cottage in the bush where he believes he can blossom unseen and without inviting anybody's jealousy. One good result of the armed burglary that swept Ishan in the post-war years of 1949 to 1953, is that many of these isolated cottages got closed down, the inhabitants forgot their fears for witches and returned to swell the population of the growing towns and villages.

The absence of any big river and any special industry also contributed to the existence of myriads of settlements with far too many Enijie.

During the devastating tribal wars each settlement was surrounded by a moat or ditch (IYALA), while the actual settlement was situated in a belt of uncleaned forest. Such a settlement consisted of several compounds, with the men in front and the women's houses built behind and in the compound.

Trade, industry, seats of learning, hospitals etc., will be the dominant factors in bringing the scattered inhabitants of Ishan together. Thus in our lifetime, we can see the population of Uromi, a trade centre, Ubiaja, as an administrative headquarters and centre of learning, Irrua with a Hospital, Provincial Farm and a junctional town, all rapidly growing.

3. The State:

Ishan was divided into more or less water-tight components each dominated by an onojie. The first profitable association of the Enijie began after the end of the Inter-tribal Wars. With these wars, dictated by primitive instincts (sic!), raging everywhere, no coming-together for the purpose of enacting common laws, fixing of market days etc., was possible. For instance, big markets like the present Uromi or Irrua market did not exist and any woman leaving Ekpoma to attend Irrua market, for example, would only succeed in getting herself sold into slavery or beheaded if she resisted. Also common laws were pointless in that if a man broke them and was having the goodwill of his own onojie, the other Enijie had neither the right nor the effective means of punishing the criminal. Ishan at that time, consisted therefore, of entirely separate states.

The system of government fell into the following line. At the top was the ONOJIE, who ruled through the chiefs or EKHAEMON who were mostly hereditary types like the ONIHA, The IYASERE, the EZOMO etc. These in turn, had Quarter Chiefs who without ostentatious show of power, ruled through the Village Council of EDION (ENEDION). Even where the onojie succeeded in breaking the power of these traditional, fearless and most straight-forward hereditary chiefs, and replaced them with puppets of his own, the actual administration of the villages was in the hands of the ELDERS, the chiefs being merely the onojie's ambassadors.

(i) THE ONOJIE was the supreme head of State; his office being that of a constitutional monarch, was protected with wisely planned laws governing succession, installation and death of the holder. The onojie lives in Eguare, the Administrative Headquarters of the district. Each clan in Ishan has specific quarters whose elders form the KING-MAKERS. In all cases except UROMI, Eguare was one of them, and its Odionwele and the State Osukhure headed the kingmakers.

(ii) THE LAWS OF SUCCESSION barring slight variations in each district, there are SEVEN Basic Laws governing the selection,

succession and installation of an Onojie, for which our forefathers, despite the simple age in which they lived, must be commended. Every one of these seven laws has great significance, emphasizing the innate political cunning of the kingmakers. These laws are:—

1. The constitutional Title of ONOJIE is hereditary, passing from father to son.
2. The first surviving legitimate son succeeds his father.
3. There can be no lawful succession until after the BURIAL CEREMONIES of the late Onojie have been completed, according to native laws and custom.
4. He who performs these Burial Ceremonies inherits the family property, which is not shared, and succeeds to the Title. These Burial Ceremonies have the greatest significance with Ishan Laws of Inheritance and hence this fourth law is of over-riding importance.
5. Once an Onojie, always an Onojie, so that once a man has been duly installed as an Onojie according to native laws and custom, nothing but death removes him.
6. The Title, being that of a Constitutional Monarch, which is held in trust for the community, cannot be willed or voluntarily relinquished in favour of any son, brother, uncle or a trusted friend.
7. The official burial place for an Onojie is at a special spot or location IN EGUARE.

(iii) ANNOTATIONS: Where these laws have been correctly interpreted and strictly adhered to, succession strifes are rare and if they do occur, are short-lived.

LAW 1. Ensures that a son succeeds to the property and title of his father and a single line of inheritance is maintained, this being changed only when the Onojie dies without any male child. If this happens, the right to succession passes to the dead Onojie's surviving most senior brother. If he has no brother, the right passes to his eldest uncle.

LAW 2. Satisfies the uniform Ishan law that the first son inherits the father's worldly belongings. If an Onojie has several sons and the first dies leaving sons of his own, the right to succession falls on the second son who will, of course, then be the FIRST SON when the father dies. The children of the initial first son have no claim whatsoever to the title, as long as their uncles are alive and healthy.

The son must be legitimate; children from lovers (ỌMỌ ỌSHỌ) or from an AREBHOA of Ishan 'B', have no claim on the Title.

LAW 3. Ensures that the excitement over property and love of office does not prevent the heir-apparent from paying his dues to his dead father as a ruler by giving him the traditional respects which consist of seven days intensive and expensive ceremonies and a total of three months feasting. Even in some parts of Ishan where the standing law is THE THRONE IS NEVER VACANT (Ẹisẹ bhẹ Ẹguale abha mio Oje), immediately the Onojie dies, the Heir selected by the kingmakers, is installed as Onojie, and he must begin the vital and qualifying Burial Ceremonies AT ONCE, for should a man so installed die WITHOUT PERFORMING OR BEFORE HE COMPLETES these ceremonies the right to succession and the inheritance of the Palace Property does not pass to his heir but to his next senior brother. This emphasises the fact that no man is legally an Onojie until he has performed the Burial Ceremonies of his late father. The case of Ọmọvuọn of Ebelle very well illustrates this point. In Ebelle as soon as the dead Onojie is inter-

red, the Royal Family EGBELE install the heir at once and must start the Burial Ceremonies, the first stage, IHEVIẸ, being the most vital part of the whole show; being so, custom and prudence dictate that the IHEVIE part should never be postponed. Omovuon was so cock-sure of his claim and hold on the title that he performed part of the Ihevie but failed to end it traditionally with EMA EDIỌN (The Elders' Feasting). Then death struck at the Palace—Omovuon died without completing even part one of the ceremonies: in the eyes of the vigilant Kingmakers of Ebelle, he was as good as a Usurper and so the right of succession passed from his son to his immediate brother, Prince Igbenijie!

In addition to this real danger of 'missing the Throne' which in Ishan, is termed ORU ỌKPU FI UKHUO DỌN, after this type of hasty installation which is designed to prevent the Throne ever being empty, the new man does not exercise any authority. Until the Burial Ceremonies are completed, the Oniha administers the State.

LAW 4. Is perhaps the most important and most decisive law governing inheritance in Ishan. It affects commoners and the Ruling Houses alike since "Ọnọ luogbẹ ọle na bho Ogbẹ" or "Ọnọ to Olinmin ọle yan Uwa" (He who performs the Burial Ceremonies owns the house and all there-in). The law is based on the necessity to bury the dead Onojie and bring him in harmony with and association of the spirits of the departed Enijie. It is believed that the spirit of the newly dead Onojie merely hangs about in the next world with no abode or respect until he has been buried according to native laws and custom.

Even amongst the living, until the dead Onojie has been so buried an animal slaughtered for his departed spirit is killed outside and not yet at the Ancestral Shrine. Therefore the Burial Ceremonies cannot be shelved. If the first son is away from home, say outside Ishan, he must be sent for immediately. It is the first legitimate son that is entitled to perform these decisive ceremonies. Since succession depends upon who performs them a grave responsibility rests upon the shoulders of the Kingmakers in allowing and accepting them from ANY OTHER BUT THE FIRST SURVIVING SON. The reasons for which they could ask the second son to perform the funeral ceremonies of his father must be such that technically, the second son is the 'first surviving son.' 'For example, when the whereabouts of the first son has been unknown and there is no way to get a message to reach him, he is alive but quite incapable of performing these intensive ceremonies, as for example, when he is suffering from madness or imbecility or is a victim of an incurable, infectious, contagious and mutilating disease like Leprosy, etc. In the latter case, in the olden days, such a victim had to be sent away to live in the bush where he would live and die, since there was no known cure. A man suffering from any of the above diseases was so handicapped that he could not perform the Burial Ceremonies, and since they could not be shelved, the second son would be called upon by the Kingmakers to perform them and having done so, all rights of inheritance pass to him indisputably. There can be no equivocation about this law in Ishan and therefore the corollary is that no one can perform them for another. Anybody suggesting that for a relative only wants to trap him since these vital ceremonies decide unquestionably who the next Onojie would be.

Since this law is so very important it is the duty of the whole community to see that the reasons for the Kingmakers to allow anyone else besides the first son to perform the Burial Ceremonies are cogent and satisfactory. They have got the right here to challenge the Kingmakers since the Onojie's Funeral Ceremonies are FOR THE WHOLE COM-

MUNITY; This challenge must be such that the ceremonies are not proceeded with, for once the Kingmakers' Egbele have accepted the ceremonies, it is futile raising hell afterwards! The story of Ogiefo of Ewu illustrates what I mean. Ehiemuan, the Terrible, of Ewu had a first son that equalled him in being atrocious. In desperation he sold the cantankerous son called Abhulimen, into slavery. When Ehiemuan died the whereabouts of Abhulimen was of course unknown and no one knew if he was even still alive. The first surviving son therefore, technically, was Ogiefo, the second son. The Kingmakers then asked him to go ahead with the funeral ceremonies after which he was duly installed. Some five years after, Ogiefo who was a maternal brother of Abhulimen, felt ashamed that while he was a ruler with slaves of his own, his own senior brother was somewhere, perhaps still alive, the slave of another man. He therefore instituted a search party which found Abhulimen humiliated and sober; he was redeemed and brought home with his joyous brother building a house and marrying a wife for him. Then evil men began to pump the ex-slave that he should have been the man to be where Ogiefo was then, had he not been sold. That led to a bitter and unfortunate chieftaincy dispute which was later decided on LAW 4: he who performs the Burial Ceremonies owns the house!

Amongst commoners, an older uncle could perform the burial ceremonies for a nephew who is a minor; he then inherits the property which he holds in trust until the boy overcomes his minority. In the case of an Onojie, however, if the heir is a minor an AKHẸOA (Regent) is appointed; traditionally this is the boy's eldest uncle. He is not allowed, under any circumstance, to perform the burial ceremonies, and in any case, he could not perform them on his dead brother. When the boy comes of age, he goes through the ceremonies himself and succeeds to his father's title. By this way alteration of the true line of succession by trick is avoided. Under Ekpoma a good example is given; after the death of Ikeakhe the Unlucky succession came to be by seniority amongst the male members of the Royal Family. Onojie Udawe had 6 sons. When it was the turn of the 4th brother, the 6th, through hatred, advised him, (the 4th) to perform the vital burial ceremonies including OGBẸ. This the 4th did and God's retributive justice descended squarely on the head of the cunning 6th: the 5th brother predeceased the 4th so that the next in line of succession came to be the 6th. But when the 4th died, the 6th found that he had tricked himself! The 4th by performing the Ogbe ceremony had perpetuated the right to succession for himself and his own heirs, and thus his own brother, the 6th, had been entirely cut out: deservedly he lost!

All these go to prove that easily, when there is a dispute over succession, the dominant question for the Kingmakers is, "Who performed the Burial Ceremonies?"

LAW 5: It requires death alone to remove a man, who being known to have performed the burial ceremonies, has been installed by the Kingmakers according to native laws and custom, from the office of ONOJIE. He might be stricken helpless by a terrible disease like paralysis or even madness, all that would happen is that his functions would be performed by an Akheoa, usually, his first son, if he is grown up or the Onojie's immediate brother if otherwise. To everybody such a man is Akheoa, pure and simple. The substantive holder's death does not make a full Onojie of him. When the Onojie dies, the regent continues to act if the heir is still a minor; if not he must step down for him as soon as he has completed the burial ceremonies. Only corrupt and jelly-like Kingmakers to whom tradition means nothing talk of allowing the Akheoa

to continue until he dies. That is the richest manure on which perennial succession strife grows.

The question of an Akheoa becoming an Onojie after the death of the substantive holder, is a new one. How it began is unclear, why, is plain! Administrative Officers, called upon to adjudge chieftaincy disputes involving almost sacred traditions, had to find reasons for whichever way they passed judgment. In many cases such judgments were at variance with Ishan Laws and Custom, with the kingmakers confused and divided. To anyone who knows our custom, the line of action in these matters is simple: no new Onojie could be installed until after the burial ceremonies of the last one, and since the Akheoa cannot bury his brother, nor can these ceremonies be performed for a living person, plainly, no other man can be installed Onojie; Thus whether the real Onojie is living or dead, an AKHEOA IS ALWAYS AN AKHEOA, a Caretaker, a Regent. Under Ugboha, the reader would see how this new explanation had been used by some Administrative Officers. The late Okojie of Ugboha was said to be Akheoa for the late Udaghe who was imprisoned about 1906. Udaghe served his term and returned to Ugboha about 1908. Okojie continued as a Regent until the death of Udaghe in 1924 whence he became FULL ONOJIE!

Even in modern times when allegiance to the Oba had been transferred to the white man, an Onojie might be imprisoned. During his absence an Akheoa takes over and on the Onojie's return all authorities return to the substantive title holder. Also even while Government denies him executive and judicial powers as a punishment, during this time of denial, he is still "ZAKI" to his people! There can be no other one until death parts him from his lawful inheritance. The same thing would happen if an Onojie was deported: a regent would be appointed and if the Onojie returned alive, that Regent must step down for him. If through the instruction of the Government he is not allowed to assume the office again, no new Onojie can be appointed, at least, not according to Ishan law and custom, until the old Onojie dies. Again where the subjects actually revolt against their Onojie, as often happened at Irrua, for instance (ISỌTẸ), no new one can be installed. He regains his full prestige after settlement of the dispute. Example?

In Uromi, 1918, the late Okojie (Ogbidi) was deported to Ibadan. His son Uwagbale became Akheoa and on his return, in 1931, his son stepped down for him; Ogbidi reigned peacefully until his death in 1944. In 1927, the dauntless Asikagbon of Ugbegun was imprisoned for two and a half years by the oppressive Ishan Enijie Council. He served his term and returned to his office as Onojie, striking awe into his friends and peppering his enemies. Again in 1943 his enemies had the upper hand over him; he went to prison, returning in 1946 to his palace where he ruled until death saved Ugbegun from his hands, in 1949.

Similarly, in 1946 when Isidaehomen of Irrua was 'suspended' for about a year, this meaning that he was shun of his judicial powers, he was still ONOJIE to his revolting subjects. Yet another example; in 1939 the late Stephen Ukato was imprisoned for 18 months for criminal offences; the modern 'presidency' of the Native Court was given to the Iyasere, the 3rd. traditional chief of Ugboha, but on Ukato's return, he took over the reins of office as Onojie. Another example is given by the long-living Imadogiemu of Opoji or Omelimen of Ewatto, who had become so senile that in each case, the first son deputised for the father until he died before the son became Onojie. One could go on and on giving examples in Ishan which go to prove the consistent law that only death can remove an Onojie from his office.

LAW 6. The attitude of every Onojie or every rich man for that matter is that his first son is for ever anxious for his early death so that he can step in! An interesting example is given by OBANOSA who as the aged EDAIKEN (Crown Prince) used to pluck his grey hairs which he sent to his father to show that he was getting quite old and would like to taste of the glory of being an OBA before he died! His father, Oba Akengbuda (1750—1804), a man with a high sense of humour, would send in return the sweet-tasting mixture of chalk and salt, as a sign that the world, so full of wars and woes, was still so sweet to him, that he could not leave it just then!

Because of this feeling between father and son all over, it is not surprising that there is often open enmity between an Onojie and his heir: the terrible Eimuan of Ewu actually sold his heir, Abhulimen, to slave traders; it was painful but it gave him peace of mind! In Irrua the feud between the Onojie at Eguare and the Edaiken at Oyomo was proverbial. The situation therefore was, were it possible, the Onojie could have gladly done anything that would make his hated first son predecease him or make it impossible for him to succeed him. But for the wisdom of our illiterate forebears, it could have been frequent occurrence for the Enijie to will the right of succession to their invariably more loved second sons, or to his brother where he has no sons. The title is not his and therefore he cannot do as he pleases with it.

If on the death of the Onojie the rightful heir, for some reasons which must be so rare and genuine as to convince the Kingmakers, were to decline to succeed his father, which must also mean REFUSAL TO INHERIT HIS FATHER'S PROPERTY, including wives, the question of who was the next in line of succession was the prerogative of the Kingmakers, and Kingmakers alone. He cannot say, for instance, "I, Prince 'A', voluntarily relinquish my claim to this title for myself and my descendants, IN FAVOUR OF MY BROTHER 'B' OR MY UNCLE 'C'!" That would be a sin crying to the high heavens against Ishan Custom.

I would here mention a complication is bound to arise, where a set of kingmakers either through ignorance or sheer corruption, allow this type of thing to happen. Suppose in order to be able to inherit property and wives only, the heir performed the Burial Ceremonies before he renounced his claim to the Onojie Title in favour of anybody else, he is only trapping that person and that person's descendants; for by performing these ceremonies he has established irrevocable claim to the title not only for himself but for his own offsprings. Thus after the death of himself and the person who benefited from his renunciation, his own children and not the children of the recently dead Onojie, have the right to succession.

The Kingmakers are fully aware of these complications, hence they have adhered rigidly to these laws. Short of stark Lunacy or a disease so incapacitating that the man is not responsible for his actions, it will be difficult for a normal man to refuse the inheritance his birth has brought to him.

LAW 7. No matter where an Onojie dies, in or outside his domain, his remains must be brought to Eguare to be interred in the official place. The corollary also stands: no one who is not an Onojie, be he a great warrior or a popular Okhaemon, can be buried on these sacred grounds. In 1931, the late Chief Okojie of Ugboha died at the Enijie's Rest House at Ubiaja while standing trial at the hands of his Royal Colleagues, over OSẸNUWEGBE CULT; his body was brought to Eguare Ugboha for burial. In 1941, Momodu (Osobase, Akpakpa) of Irrua died and his remains was brought from Agbor to Eguare Irrua.

In the case of Ubiaja the traditional burial ground is not Eguare but AHIA. Two reasons brought this about: Under Ubiaja, it will be seen that the original Home of the early rulers of Ubiaja was at Ahia. Secondly, going far into the district to lay the Onojie to rest in his traditional home, was an attempt to outwit some kleptomaniacs desecrating the Royal Vault at Eguare and making off with all or parts of the Onojie's body, particularly, the head. Thus came the understandable custom of when an Onojie died, the body was preserved by drying, and then taken to a secret spot at Ahia via a tortuous route for burial, and as an extra precaution, the head which was the most valued trophy for enemies, was buried apart after decapitation.

(IV) SELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF AN ONOJIE:

Though the Onojie has several wives with several children, the sons, particularly the first to the third, are generally well known. The first son is not only well known but is closely watched right from his early childhood to adult age, by the Iweguae (Ibiẹ Ẹguae). These, in Ishan, are servants, attendants and Eguare favourites in close contact with the day to day happenings at ODUGHA (Palace). This recognized first son must be legitimate and must not be an issue from a lover or an Arebhoa. His position is daily confirmed as the recognized son and heir, by the custom of his eating all the hearts of animals slaughtered at the ancestral shrine in the Palace. Thus by the time his father dies, he is already so well known that the Kingmakers have no trouble in making a selection, which is really, a formal invitation for him to step forward.

Very wisely in some districts like Irrua and Uromi, the heir is recognized officially by making him live at OYỌMỌ with his immediate family, so that by the time his father dies he is already enjoying some state privileges like a chief.

(V) FORMS OF INSTALLATION:

In pure Ishan custom there is only one form of installation: accession after the last Onojie has been duly buried. But since the coming of the white man and 'civilization' a second form gradually took shape on the assumption of the "Throne is never vacant" (Ojie ifo bhẹ Ẹguale). With this in view as soon as the Onojie dies, his first son is sent for, (often he turns up hastily, more concerned with inheritance than with the spirit of his departed father!). As happens in places like Ewohimi and Igueben, the old official paraphernalia, like cap, beads, rings, charms etc., always worn by the Onojie when he was alive, are removed from him and put on the son who is then blessed by the Osukhure at the ancestral shrine, and with the Odionwele, in the presence of the elders of the Kingmakers, he is installed. This is only in name, for he is forbidden any outing and in any case he is, for the next three months, so engrossed with the intensive Burial Ceremonies, that nothing else concerns him. The authority of the Onojie is meantime being wielded by the Oniha. Starting the burial ceremonies AT ONCE is imperative both on his own account and the interest of the state, because though he has been installed Onojie, should he die before he begins or completes the ceremonies, succession and inheritance of the palace property, pass not to his own heir but to his own brother, that is, his heir's uncle. To get full claim to his father's property and the throne for himself and his descendants, he must start and complete these ceremonies with the least delay. For the Kingmakers too, they are equally anxious for these ceremonies to be undertaken without delay to avoid complications and succession strifes. Thus without the Burial Ceremonies, no inheritance of property or title is recognized or lawful.

(VI) THE BURIAL CEREMONIES:

As said above the original Ishan custom makes no pretence at succession until the heir has completed all the ceremonies entitling him to inheritance of property and title. As the father dies, he comes to the Palace, takes over the keys from the ODIBO (Chief Steward), and after the ceremonies surrounding interment, the Egbele of the Kingmakers appoint a day when the Burial Ceremonies begin. It is misleading saying that if the heir has no materials yet for the ceremonies, they could be postponed. Anyone who understands the position of the Onojie in Ishan history will understand that it was near impossible for anyone else in the district to be richer than himself: he could loot and plunder at will, so that by the time he died, practically every Cow in the street of Eguare was his. Yams, money and oil abounded in the harem. All these were for the first son to make a good start in life. It is preposterous therefore to suggest that the burial of an Onojie could be postponed for lack of means, unless the son wanted to bury his father with an elephant!

On the eve of the appointed day, booming of guns begins and for the next SEVEN DAYS the cannonading is terrific, this being the chief feature of burial ceremonies in Ishan. Cows, goats, etc., are slaughtered for the dead Onojie at a shrine, yet consisting of a hole dug in the quadrangle of the Palace, until after the burial ceremonies before he is considered worthy of taking his place amongst the departed Enijie, at the shrine usually called ALU IJESAN. Details with variations will be seen in Part Two of the book, but uniform is the fact that there is intense feasting for the Kingmakers' Egbele in particular and the whole town in general. Most of the expenses are borne by the heir but any of the well-to-do sons, like the second to the fourth sons may help by slaughtering a Cow each.

Though the Onojie's burial ceremonies lasts up to three months the essential customary ceremonies, which are a MUST, are completed in SEVEN days, and the rest of the period is used by the chief celebrant in rejoicing over his assured inheritance and trying to make up for his expenses from yams and other presents people send to him. From the time of death to the end of the Burial Ceremonies is THREE MONTHS.

When the vital ceremonies are over, that is after seven days, the Elders of the Kingmakers gather at the Palace, led by the Osukhure and the Odionwele. The heir is now dressed in the traditional way with the wrists, ankles and neck resplendent with several coils or strings of Coral Beads, and wearing UBUNUKU. He is taken before the ancestral shrine where the spirits of all the past Enijie are now 'assembled.' A goat is slaughtered to appease them and the Osukhure presents and blesses him in their name. The heir is then taken to the inner OJIUKHO (MAIN THRONE) which is close to the Shrine, and he is installed by the Osukhure, the Odionwele of the Kingmakers Egbele and the Oniha: Holding him up by both hands he is COUNTED ON THE THRONE, making him take his seat on the ELEVENTH COUNT. He sits squarely and in comfort, MONARCH of all he surveys! During the actual counting the three men are blessing him and repeating, UKHATỌ, UKPẸLE, ALE RẸNỌMỌN (Long may you reign and when your reign comes to a great end may you be succeeded by your own son).

The men now step back and give him the first salutation as ONOJIE, 'DO ỌMỌN,' which is replaced in modern times with 'ZAKI!' This is the signal for all the Kingmakers to come forward to do homage to their new Ruler. Then follows the booming of guns, and he moves on now to the outer Ojiukhuo where he is presented to the rest of Eguare

and the general public. All now come forward to honour and acknowledge him with "DO OMON," in order of precedence.

Though he is now the lawful Onojie and has full claim to the title and all in the Palace, no outing is allowed and the administration is carried on till after three months, when the Oniha or in the case of Irrua, the UWAGUE, has been thanked for his services in the traditional way.

The next thing is the Outing: This is not only essential for the spread of goodwill amongst his districts and subjects but it is quite lucrative. He visits all the powerful sub-chiefs as a sign of friendship and they, like the commoners, give him presents of money and in kind. This step is very necessary especially where there has been some trouble like Isote (Revolt) in Irrua, before the late Onojie died.

The question of selection and installation of a new Onojie is as easy as described above where there is no dispute, but where there is one the Kingmakers' task is arduous and here the ripe knowledge of the Osukhure as custodian of all the rites and tradition in the Palace comes in useful. If the succession strife is a result of paternity, e.g., the second son challenging the supposed first son on the ground of legitimacy, it is the Osukhure who must be the final arbiter. For example, at every Iluobo (worship at Ancestral Shrine), it is the man recognized by the Onojie and Egbele as the first son that is given the heart to eat. The son who the Onojie has persistently given the hearts to eat is of course the acknowledged FIRST SON. If he was wrongfully giving the hearts to another son, it was then the challenge should have come and the Egbele should have known about it. But the giving of the hearts to a son is a public testimony that 'this is my son and heir!'

If the dispute over succession came on long after the Onojie died, the vital Burial Ceremonies come prominently into the picture: "Who performed the Burial Ceremonies?" There is no one more qualified to answer that than the Osukhure. During the Burial Ceremonies all the cows and goats slaughtered for the late Onojie are used for worshipping on behalf of the heir by the Osukhure. No man who is not entitled to inheritance will be allowed to perform the Burial Ceremonies, hence the elders of the Kingmakers and the Osukhure must be the supreme body entrusted with the responsible duty of making a selection before installation. If the strife is a result of an argument over whose forefathers reigned as Enijie, the Osukhure as the recorder of the departed Enijie, again looms into respected significance, because at every Iluobo or worshipping rite, he recites the names of the past Enijie. The next Odion in the Kingmakers' quarter, who takes over the post when the old Osukhure dies, knows the order from what he had repeatedly heard his predecessor say at each rite.

(VII) ADMINISTRATION:

The government of the Capital, Eguare, was that of the State as well since lesser chiefs, like the Oniha, Iyasere, Ezomo etc., repeated the pattern of the Onojie, subject to control only in matters affecting the whole state or district, neighbour relations, 'revenue collection', raising of military forces, dispensation of justice over capital offences as murder, stealing, adultery with the Onojie's wife etc., and appeals which were very rare, to the court of the Onojie. The villages similarly controlled their own affairs with these same limitations. The intermediaries between the Council of Elders in the villages and the Onojie were the Ekhaemon.

In the village itself the Edion were the rulers and the Ekhaemon had little voice at village meetings, but the power and influence on matters

outside the village were exercised by the Ekhaemon. Since the Onojie was 'Lord Supreme' of all he surveyed in his domain and the Ekhaemon were his agents in the village, in practice, outside spiritual matters, the Odionwele was nothing compared with the Okhaemon; in fact in the olden days, the Okhaemon could loot and humiliate the Odionwele in the name of the Onojie and get away with it!

The Onojie, with his chiefs to a lesser extent, combined legislative, executive and judicial functions and hence was all powerful. The Onojie, the titular head of many associations in the land, was an institution of his own, and his power was limited only by the courage, avarice and the sensitivity of the conscience of the holder of the title. When major decisions had to be taken there was one body that was nearly as supreme as the Onojie — the INOTU. Their strength was UNITY and in most parts of Ishan they could stage trials, punish, loot or sell an accused, but only after a fair trial. Still in places like Irrua and Uromi that had always had extra brave and autocratic Enijie, the nearest thing to the truth was that the Onojie was above the law. He killed his enemies, and that included those who dared oppose any measure however atrocious, and it was no murder, but merely removing a clog in his grinding wheel; for example Ikenoa of Uromi roasted his brothers alive and was not killed by the Inotu. The Onojie could loot and plunder a whole village and the charge of stealing could not lie! He could seize another's wife and it was no adultery.

The towns and districts under the big titled chiefs, particularly the hereditary ones, were largely autonomous. What really made them appear as one unit under one Onojie consisted of the tributes these chiefs and their subjects paid to the Onojie, external relations which were controlled by the government of the Capital, Eguare, and the fact that the Onojie had to install them when the old ones died. The functions of these titled chiefs were repeated on a smaller scale in towns, villages and even UẸLẸN (family Unit). Thus the people in an Uelen paid yearly tribute of yams and animals slaughtered or killed while hunting. to the Omijiogbe, who was head or ruler of that family!

(VIII) TRIBUTES:

Following the above the Omijiogbe was the bottom rung in the rulers of state. Young or old, his inheritance made him head of all those who had a common ancestry with his own father. As custodian of their own ancestral shrine all his brothers, uncles and cousins came to him when they had to appease the spirits of their departed forefathers. Once a year they paid tribute consisting of a bundle of yams (usually 7 yams to a bundle), and a calabash of palm wine. Whenever they killed any animal in the bush or slaughtered a domestic animal like a goat, one of the hind legs had to be sent to the Omijiogbe, so that in a big family he was quite a comfortable man. Similarly the first daughters of his immediate brothers were to be married out by him and he accepted the bride price.

Higher up in the administrative hierarchy was the village Okhaemon to whom yams, palm wine, kola-nuts etc., were sent either to seek favour or show respect. To the Onojie there was compulsory tribute to be paid by all in his territory apart from the usual free labour in his farm and houses, gifts of yams, kola-nuts and palm wine galore. No one in the whole village or district might kill in hunting any animal like Bush-cow, Pig, Deer, etc., without sending the hind leg to the Onojie. Failing to do this was not just disrespect but was an offence against native law and custom. The Tiger (Leopard, really) as a ruler of the jungle was in

another category altogether. No one could kill one and proceed to quarter it. In Ishan it is not really edible, but a man killing it had by that act become a hero (ỌKHAE) in the district, and followed by a War Dance, the animal carried on the head was taken to Eguare. The hunter was publicly acknowledged a hero by the Onojie who blessed him and gave him the bead of valour, the ẸKAN. He was not a titled man, but from then on he ranked with the elders and chiefs, with extra privileges such as exemptions from forced labour at Eguare and the right to stage the yearly War Dance in his house or to the Onojie's Palace.

The Onojie had a quarter in Eguare that had the duty of butchering the Leopard, not for eating but for preserving certain vitals like the head, whiskers and heart for medicines. The hide was used as a mat by the Onojie and the rest of the royal carcass was given a fitting burial! The Ishans believe in allergic manifestations following touch or swallowing parts of such animals like the cat and the leopard; they also believe that by a careful introduction of parts of these animals to the body untoward consequences could be avoided. Thus in the olden days before the rest of the carcass was buried bits of the flesh were distributed to children and youngsters who had not tasted it before, to eat. Having eaten it severe manifestations that could follow a desperate hunter quenching his thirst in a hole from which a leopard might have drunk water were rendered less severe or prevented altogether.

(IX) MILITARY ORGANIZATION: There was no standing army amongst the Ishans. Every able-bodied man from Igene upwards or all members of Inotu, where that association existed, were a ready source for military recruitment. Every man capable of bearing arms had to fight when the village was attacked or when the village had to take reprisals against seizure of a wife, killing of a man, etc. The leader of the warriors was the 'Ọkakulo' who was not only a physically strong man but a feared medicine man. Recruitment came in the main from the special set of Igene called OKULOKHIMIOTỌ.

Here is a convenient place to say a few words of the devastating TRIBAL WARS. Though our forefathers were primitive, each war had a cause and was not just the savages' thirst for blood. These wars were fought either to avenge wrongs by a neighbouring tribe, for example, seizure of a wife or a man, or for arson which was overt declaration of war, killing of a man of one tribe in another tribe's territory, or strifes following succession to the throne — the contestant running usually to his mother's people who came to war with the man then occupying Odugha and his people. Inter-tribal or more correctly in Ishan, Inter-clanish, wars rarely had slave trade as an incentive. Slaves were made of captives, true, but these were merely by-products of war. More often the warriors rejoiced with heads of well-known people amongst the enemies rather than take their owners home as slaves. Such rejoicing went on for Seven Days and on the seventh day, to steel the nerves of the warriors, the braver ones assembled at the village square for the ceremonial scalping. The toughest excelled others by eating fried corn with the left hand while harking away with the right! When scalped, the skull was used to adorn the ancestral shrine or kept as a trophy in some conspicuous part of the house.

After the initial wars by the Obas immediately following Ewuare the Selfish, Ishan and its Enijie became vassals of the Binis. Inter-tribal wars stopped or became a limited affair. For example, when a new man became Oba he usually sent round chalk of rejoicing and peaceful intent round the territories owing allegiance to Benin. Any Onojie

A COLUMN OF ISHAN WARRIORS ON THE MATCH, ABOUT 1895

The Drummer's duty was to work the men into a state of frenzy! Lethal war implements consisted of poisoned arrows, metal weapons akin to heavy matchets, Cross-bows and Cudgels. Dane Guns, reputed for their ability to fire either way (!), were not introduced to Ishan wars until the latter part of the 19th Century.

The original Ishan Drum in the picture is the OKEDE — the twin talking drum of Native Doctors and medicine men, both of which many warriors were.

who refused to accept the chalk, had not only disrespected the new Oba but had publicly refused to admit allegiance to the man then occupying the Benin Throne. That was war! Such a war understandably had to be limited to the domain of the Onojie who threw a challenge to the Oba. In most cases the other faithful Ishan Enijie fought on the same side as the Oba's forces against the rebellious Onojie. For instance, Irrua, Uromi and Ebelle fought on the same side as the Binis during the Akure War of 1818, but during the succession Civil War between Ogbebo and Eredia-uwa (later Oba Osemwede), the Ishans of Ewohimi to which Eredia-uwa had fled and the neighbouring areas fought against the Binis. Also during the Odin-Ovba (Adolo as Oba) and Ogbewekon conflict that culminated in the Amahor War of 1853, Igueben, Ebelle, Amahor and Ezen fought against the Binis while the rest of Ishan were for the Oba.

(X) NON-AGGRESSION PACT: With the sincerity that goes with unsophistication, the early Ishans had series of non-aggression pacts with neighbouring and distant districts. These pacts were made to be honoured at the pain of incurring the dreaded displeasure of the departed spirits or suffering of a sudden and violent death. These pacts expressed as "WE DO NOT SEE EACH OTHER'S BLOOD," came about in these ways:—

(a) Settlements founded by men of kindred relationship like brothers treated themselves like members of same Egbele and the drawing of blood amongst them was strictly forbidden, e.g., Udo and Ubiaja, Emu and Ohordua, Egoro and Opoji etc.

(b) Settlements founded by people under the OKOVẸN system were under oath to live like brothers even though not related by blood. Though intermarriage was allowed between them, they could not take each other's wives. Any injury was left for the Okoven oath to settle, and anybody who took up his matchet to avenge such wrong was himself committing a bigger crime.

(c) Traditional enemies might come to live in peace and all blood letting was strictly forbidden even though there was no blood affinity and no Okoven. Such followed the marriage of one Onojie's daughter to the Onojie of the enemy clan. That happened when Ediale of Uromi married out one of his many beautiful daughters, Ozedu, to Uabomen, Onojie of Opoji. She was the mother of Omokhoa who became Onojie of Opoji round about 1835. From then on the connection between the ruling houses of Uromi and Opoji led to a mutually appreciated non-aggression pact.

(d) Sometimes one powerful and respected figure acted as a connecting rod between two districts which might have been poles apart before. The great warrior, blacksmith and physician, Enowe, was born in Ugboha Ishan, fought hand-in-hand with Eben, founder of Igueben and died in Idumu-Igun Ugboha in Benin City. The three places, Ugboha in Ishan, Igueben and Benin City deified Enowe. The love for a common factor led to a non-aggression pact between Ugboha Ishan and Igueben.

(e) Similarly a potent enemy could bring about the cement of friendship. For example, a terrible enemy had been raiding the districts around as happened when Ebohon of Benin was preying on many Ishan clans in the second half of the eighteenth century; all who called Ebohon ENEMY regarded themselves as FRIENDS and so would be helping their common foe by attacking themselves: that type of thing was a good beginning of friendly relations. Fighting Ozolua had done his best to rule Ekpoma out as a nation about 1480. In 1503, the same

Ozolua wanted to humiliate Agba of Uromi; the desire to extirpate their common object of hate resulted in the proverbial brotherhood between Ekpoma and Uromi ever since.

These are the main reasons why two clans that have lived in peace for years come to express their cordial relationship simply as "Because we are BROTHERS." One should be chary therefore in accepting non-aggression pacts as evidence of patrilineage.

CHAPTER III

JUSTICE

THE administration of justice began with the village Elders' Council. In this ancient judiciary system, the Edion had the power to try and award appropriate punishments in practically all disputes and crimes except for capital offences like murder, evils of witchcraft and land disputes which were passed up to the Onojie in Eguare for decision, where he was powerful or if he was a weak ruler, to the formidable INOTU.

Usually the Edion held their meeting at the Okoughele at the centre of the village square; here the crime was investigated and all those concerned were given a fair hearing. The Edion then moved away to confer (IYI-UMA), and on their return their spokesman gave their decision. This decision might be followed by a FINE (OKO) or seizure of a goat or the guilty person might be ordered to swear on a given juju to convince the elders of his innocence. Special crimes had special ways of dealing with them; prescribed punishments also differed.

(*A*) *CRIMES AND PUNITIVE MEASURES:*

(1) LAWS OF ADULTERY: (UGHẸLẸMI or IGBOGHẸLẸ). In the olden days this term was strictly limited to a man having anything to do with a wife of a man of the same Egbele, *i.e.*, members of the same patrilineage or people who descended from one father. Strictly, in the olden days (AGBỌN ỌBA) it would be difficult for a man to charge another man from another village with adultery. If a man tried to seduce another man's wife in the district market, the husband would waylay the seducer and attack him. Where the two men belonged to the same village, the matter would be referred to the village council. If the charge was admitted he would be fined a goat which was slaughtered at the ancestral shrine of the Egbele; certain additional fines were made to be given to the aggrieved husband for purification of the woman before she and her husband could live as man and wife again. The clothes she used on the material day had to be discarded and an ỌMỌKWIAN (A married daughter of the Egbele) had to perform the purification rite consisting of touching the body all round with a few days old chick and spitting of partially chewed alligator pepper on the sinner's body, referred to as UHUMEGBEA.

If the accused denied the allegation he had the following alternatives: he invited his accuser to swear on a named juju, which if done he would be prepared to suffer any just punishment the Edion might prescribe; he might elect to swear on a given juju, which if he did, before the living he was innocent. If the crime was one viewed with real seriousness particularly if the woman was the wife of a great personage of the village recourse might be taken to trial by ordeal — ITAN.

In the punishment for adultery the woman suffered the greater physical atonement crowned with subjection to a public ridicule and indignity as a deterrent to the other women of the village. All the married women of the village gathered at the Odion IKHUO-IDUMU (Senior of the married women) and the delinquent woman was sent for. She was then shaved (in this case to humiliate her), stripped of all her clothes and the terrible stinging nettle leaves were wrapped round her waist and body; a heavy load made so cumbersome that it would require the two hands to balance on the head, was put on her and with her hands already employed for this purpose she could not scratch her intensely itchy body! She was asked to sing and with this she was danced round the village with her load made heavier by the addition of rubbish which

was picked up at every corner of the village. She was mocked and flogged and when her tomentors were at last tired she was returned to her husband's house, a disgrace to herself and her husband. The goat bought by her co-respondent was slaughtered at the family ancestral shrine. Egbele shared the flesh.

It took that for her crime to be forgiven by the departed ancestors but it took years for the odium of this crime by this woman to be forgotten by the living. This with the superstitious belief that if the crime was not reported and the necessary punishment suffered, either she or her children or queerly, her innocent husband would fall ill and die, made Ishan women very faithful.

(*a*) *Adultery With the Onojie's wife:* This was a crime equivalent to murder and the punishment was death for both the man and the woman. But where the man was a very close relative of the Onojie, as for example, his son or only maternal brother, the Onojie in his absolute discretion could waive the death sentence and substitute banishment. Similarly if the woman was a particularly loved one or was the mother of the most favourite son, her life might be spared and she had the option of being sold as a slave. In this case of adultery with the ruler's wife the man suffered the greater punishment.

(*b*) *Incest:* There were certain crimes more of incest than adultery.

(i) If a man had a carnal knowledge of his mother-in-law, it was a serious crime crying to the spirits of the departed ancestors for immediate vengeance: it was punishable not only by the usual payment of a goat, but by the forfeiture of the wife, the erring woman's daughter. This also was the customary punishment for any man who committed adultery with any member of his wife's family. Again I repeat that the Octopus called ONOJIE was an institution all by himself: he could go beyond what among commoners was known as adultery: he could marry two sisters!

(ii) 'Adultery' with one's own mother (it happened occasionally amongst psychopaths of great moral depravity), was followed by a special prescribed punishment; the man had to be born again as he had fouled his present life beyond atonement. The female members of the family were called together and the mother had to treat her equally stupid son as if he was a new born baby; he was carried on the lap, washed, his face smeared with chalk and camwood, was given the breast to suck, carried on the back and the idiotic mother had to carry her son on the lap to be fed. It must be a most degrading ordeal for both the mother and the incestuous son!

(iii) Sexual relationship between a brother and a sister or people of blood relationship up to SECOND COUSIN, was not permissible, but there was no prescribed punishment; usually the 'crime' was undetected until one of the sinners fell ill or a native doctor in a charm session told the parents of either. Reparation consisted of the slaughtering of ẸBHI IBHALẸN ("I-do-not-know goat!") at the family shrine. Again, the woman suffered the heavier punishment and shame; in theory the two sinners had to provide the goat, but in practice the man paid a nominal amount of anything from a few cowries to half the cost of a goat; all that was required of him for the appeasement of the disapproving dead ancestors was that he must pay something towards the cost of the goat.

(*c*) *Rape* (*OBHIGEDU*)*:* If the girl was still with her father there was no prescribed punishment, but married or unmarried the crime was quite rare, in that the custom of clitoridectomy successfully acted as a deterrent against pre-maturity sexual knowledge. If a girl did have such a knowledge before circumcision on the circumcision day, the

Ọwena (Native Surgeon) publicly declared her not a virgin to the great shame of the parents and the girl herself. There were fines to be paid to the Owena: a cock, all her every-day wearing apparels and the mat she slept on. The disgrace of having used a cock to have her circumcision done far exceeded the pain of a fine, and to escape this all girls behaved themselves. A few erring ones (moral standards were very high in those days!) owned up to their parents at great pains and the Owena was bribed heavily with the usual fines doubled. At such a false ceremony there were extra dancings and booming of guns!

(*d*) *Definition of Adultery* (*OGHELE*): The Ishans' sensitivity to interference with their wives could be imagined from what custom accepts as constituting adultery. Any of the following, unless immediately reported, was Igboghele and in practice the immediate report to one's husband only exonerated the woman but not the man.

1. Actual carnal knowledge or the expression of wish for same — there could be no joking with making the request!
2. Stepping over the extended legs of a married woman.
3. Putting a leg on her.
4. Touching her clothes or her waist beads.
5. Shaking her hand.
6. Making her particularly behind and below the lower ribs.
7. Tickling eyes at her.
8. Sitting on her or allowing her to sit on the man's lap.
9. Sitting on the same bed with her.
10. Beckoning to her while the man is in a room.
11. Giving her monetary presents or lending her money without the husband's knowledge and approval.
12. Putting a hand round her waist or neck.

With the exception of the actual act most of these are expressed simply as ẸMỌN-AWA (FORBIDDEN WORD), and the accused man was in for an inquisition before the Edion at the Okoughele!

2. WITCHCRAFT:

Suspicion of witchcraft might follow frequent deaths in a compound, an epidemic in a village, or one might be involved because a very sick person had 'CONFESSED HIM' as a fellow criminal in the evils of the land, or in some cases particularly amongst Ugboha people, and also amongst native doctors, a man might just to enhance his prestige in the community and to strike awe into his fellow beings, publicly declare that he is a wizard!

During my studies of Ishan custom I took a very keen interest in these confessions and my profession which makes me a frequent witness to the last few hours of people on earth, has given me the signal opportunity of studying the method of obtaining these confessions and their effects on the rest of the community. There are two types of confessions which I have come to term, COLD and HOT. A cold confession is one in which a person, usually an anxious and terrified mother, seeing her child gravely ill and being warned by the juju priest that it is her crime that is making her child ill and that unless she confesses it the child must die, is urged to confess all her lapses, usually in connection with adultery by actual deed, words or intention. In many cases the woman's anxiety over her child's illness makes her too willing to commit crimes against herself. In this world it will be hard to get a woman who has never answered a word of salutation from a man who is not her husband, or whose clothes have never been touched willingly or unintentionally or who has never returned a kind smile from a man; in the circumstance

that leads to a cold confession all these are compatible with adultery! So the poor woman racks her brain for something to say. If she was totally innocent, and fully aware of the insistent warning that it is her crime and her crime ALONE that is making her child face an untimely death, she invents a crime which she knows in her tortured soul she has never committed, if only her child lives! Rubbing his wicked hands gleefully, the native doctor tells the woman what to do as atonement. This of course is quickly done, but the child still dies and the marriage is broken.

The hot type consists of pieces of words or incoherent sentences mumbled by a delirious patient suffering from such high fevers as accompany Acute Malaria, Pneumonia (ẸFẸN IFẸNMẸN ẸLIMIN, meaning THE CHEST WITH THE DEVIL'S ARROWS!), Meningitis etc., and pieced together by over-zealous relatives. No one cares to know or notices that the unfortunate person can never be made to repeat what he has just said, and in every case, that after the illness he denies every word he is said to have spoken! He has made a confession often against himself and this may concern a crime from stealing, through adultery to witchcraft. If any person's name is mentioned, and like a man in a game of dominoes, quickly follows with another name of a person who is dead, the relatives and herbalists sitting around, treacherously fill the gap and within a few minutes the story filters through the village that the sick man has made a confession that he caused the death of the dead man. Sometimes if a person's name was mentioned in connection with any death in the village, the suspected person is later brought to the village square and subjected to an inquisition which is painful whichever way the accused takes. If through fear he admits the allegation, he may escape sure death by being drummed out of the village as an undesirable. In the olden days rather than drum him out of the village with ignominy that would make it impossible for him to get an asylum within a radius of some 30 miles, he was sent onto the Onojie where he became a slave if his life was spared. If fully aware of these grave consequences, the accused denies the allegation it will be hard for us in modern times to imagine what was such a man's fate only 60 years ago. He was more or less doomed. Justice for a man suspected of witchcraft but denying it, consisted of TRIAL BY ORDEAL. There were two methods, each painful to the extreme.

(*a*) *Itan:* This was sincerely a trial of endurance and in most cases the result depended upon the vagaries of the ITAN PRIEST: if he himself suspected the accused or if he knew public opinion was heavily against the man, or if the Onojie was interested in the man's guilt the result was definite — GUILTY, would be the verdict!

The actual trial consisted of the suspect being taken to a circle marked with chalk. Kneeling and protruding his tongue, he was told the charge and the priest repeated: "You are said to be a wizard; if you are innocent may you be WHITENED but if you are not, may you be caught right here, and he proceeded to pass a thick cock's feather, root first, through the tongue of the unfortunate man. The ordeal of passing a blunt ended feather through a man's tongue can only be imagined. With the person in utter agony, salivating and the priest repeating incantations, the ordeal went on until he succeeded in lacerating the tongue through with the feather passing from below upwards. This could only happen if he wanted the man freed or whitened, or the man is so dead to pain that he just allowed the priest to tear his tongue as much as he pleased. If the accused was a coward as soon as the pain was beyond what he could bear, he begged the torturer to stop and pro-

nounced himself GUILTY. Sometimes even where he was really courageous, the priest after pulling till he was himself tired stopped and pronounced the man GUILTY. This verdict was obtained by his saying that the feather had become stuck half-way and nothing on earth could get it through. Everybody at the trial including the accused man's immediate family like his wife or mother, took that as a fair trial and left believing their beloved man QUITE GUILTY! The man then was left to face the prescribed punishment.

(*b*) *Sasswood:* Again this depended more or less upon what the public thought and their feeling towards the accused, although in some fortunate cases where the feeling of antipathy was so strong that the public desired immediate death, the trial was over-enthusiastic and queerly, the person was saved by his God.

A man accused of witchcraft who denied it was taken to the Sasswood centre and a decoction from the bark of the tree was made; this was given to the man to drink with the words—"If you are guilty may this fluid kill you and if you are innocent may you vomit and recover." If the public feeling against the accused was strong, one or both of two things might happen: At the centre an extra large dose was given him to drink with a vengeance. Because of the extreme and excessive distension of the stomach vomiting began early before enough of the alkaloid was assimilated into the blood stream to cause a sure poisoning. The man vomited copiously, thus ridding his stomach of all the decoction he had taken a short while ago! Such a man recovered due to over-dosage! A less lucky and much hated man after drinking the potion was subjected to a wicked physical strain that told mortally on his heart and body: he was made to run and dance up and down the village square with the village Igene or Inotu at hand to ensure his death. They danced round him as he stooped now and then to have bouts of vomiting that sapped one's strength; As soon as he was through with that they urged him on, running and dancing until he collapsed and died of sheer physical exhaustion, even before the poison did its work! He was declared guilty and was given a burial befitting a rat.

Lesser crimes had their prescribed punishments of lesser measures than those described above: —

3. SEIZURES:

(*a*) *Seizure of Fowls:* This was the common punishment for an Egbonughele who failed to turn up for street sweeping, cleaning of inter-village paths or any villager who failed to turn up for communal labour. In the evening he would go to the head of his Age Grade and if his reasons and apology were genuine, he might be forgiven and the fowl returned. If not he might redeem the seized fowl which might belong to anybody in his Uelen or family compound, with the payment of a small monetary fine, not necessarily equivalent to cost of a fowl. If he was too proud to go and beg, the fowl was sold and any amount realised from the sale was shared by his age grade.

(*b*) *Seizure of Goats:* This was the common punishment for the more serious of the lesser crimes, and was inflicted only by the Edion. Adultery was punished by the guilty man paying a fine of a goat which was slaughtered by the Egbele at the ancestral Shrine. Still more serious crimes like beating of one's parents, setting fire to one's family house in anger, attempted suicide, stealing of planted seed yams amongst members of the same family etc., were punished with the seizure and killing of a goat against the offender even without a formal trial first. Since there was no trial there was no appeal in such cases. In nearly all these cases the slaughtering of a goat was accompanied with a fine all together

being termed ODEWE BI ELAMẸN EA (A She-goat plus Cowries worth in modern times, 1/2d.) In the olden days this was a hellish lot to rake together for this 1/2d. was equivalent to 20 Ikiokho or 2,800 Cowries!

4. Ostracism: (Amuolen Obiro):

This punitive measure was reserved for crimes tending to mar peaceful village life. For example, non-co-operation in the village, where all other punitive measures at the disposal of the Edion or Egbele had failed to cause a change of heart. Such a man might refuse to take part in a lawful communal labour, or might be guilty of disloyalty to the community as for example, trying to undermine the authority of the elders or selling his people to another village during a land dispute etc. In such cases the whole village gathered at the square and using their respected ỌKPỌ EDIỌN NE NẸN, a law was made that from then on nobody was ever to greet or answer the greetings of the man in question, no one was to enter his house for fire nor was he to enter another's house to take fire; he was thus given the most dreaded punishment the gregarious Ishans have: SOCIAL OSTRACISM, with its devastating psychological effects. Finding himself cut off from the rest of the community, including members of his own family, he either had to go on his proud knees and pay heavy fines or he quitted the village altogether.

5. Banishment: (Anolen Ubi Kua)

For this punishment to be inflicted the crime must be grave, second only to crimes for which the punishment was death. Such crimes as persistent practice of witchcraft, having hands in causation of diseases, possession of bad medicines etc., all merited this punitive measure.

The punishment consisted of the two lower age grades, Igene and Egbonughele, assembling with drums, sticks, coconut palm branches minus the leaves, brooms etc., at the man's house. He was asked to make a load of his most valued possessions which he carried on his head. As he left his house with the people drumming and singing, his footprints were systematically swept off the village street. He was led up to the village boundary and left to his fate which might be death at the hands of wild beasts or capture by slave raiders.

6. Ikpotoa, Isunfia:

There were other and rather similar methods of achieving good riddance of a man of ISUSU (Troublesome man), a wizard, a man suspected of evil juju or medicines etc.

First IKPOTỌA which means purification of the earth. It might be because of frequent deaths or alleged impending epidemic that an oracle was consulted at the village square by the whole community. At this IKHUEBỌ the native doctor decreed that the ground had been fouled and must be purified. In serious cases particularly at Eguare the purification needed anything from an animal to a human head. A man chosen for this, usually a slave, had a chicken and palm fronds tied to his waist, and a stout rope tied round his neck. Starting from one end of the village he was dragged by means of the rope along the ground, and fully alive, with much exitement and recitation of prayers all urging the departed spirits and any interested members of the world beyond to accept the sacrificed victims and remove their evil eyes from their village. By the time they got to the usual dumping grounds for sacrificed victims (IZOBO), the unfortunate man was dead if he was lucky. In certain places such victims became property of known bodies. For example,

in Ebelle all proceeds of Ikpotoa became property of the Onojie of Ezen before that territorial unit became extinct.

ISUNFIA which meant absolute banishment, is not much different from 'Unubikua'. In this case the angry people following do not go into the bother of sweeping, since the unfortunate man dragged on the ground automatically did all the necessary sweeping!

After trial and judgment at the square, sentence of ISUNFIA was passed on the accused, usually an evil-minded one. Ojomen (palm fronds) were tied round his waist; the head of a dog, a whole rabbit (the two signifying ISUSU, trouble or unrest), a chicken, and a tortoise were tied to the fronds, with all dragging along the ground. The Igene and Egbonughele came after him drumming and jeering. As he was drummed out of the village in utter disgrace, his footprints were swept off by the Ojomen and junks which raised dust after him.

Long after the white man came into Ishan these more severe punitive measures were still practised all over Ishan. For example, round about 1906, a woman called Ojolo was strongly suspected of witchcraft at Ihumu-idumu Illeh. Ikhalo the renowned native doctor of the village, who was looking after the sick son of Eigbe, convinced the community that Ojolo was the cause of the child's illness. Despite the fact that the child recovered the unfortunate woman was publicly disgraced and drummed off the village. Even in the white man's era at the beginning of this century, no one however daring would risk returning to the village where his or her footprints had been swept off.

These 'crimes' with the punishments they invited were in the main figments of imagination—mere allegations. A good number have disappeared with the advent of the white men but many, still far too many, are still a scourge in the villages, causing hatred, confusion and unhappiness. A man, who while he was gravely ill, said things he was not responsible for, was forever surrounded with the odium of adultery or witchcraft; a man, another had 'confessed' as a wizard is looked upon as such for the rest of his life. Only the stringent application of the laws of libel and defamation of character can efface these wicked allegations in our lifetime.

B. CAPITAL OFFENCES:

(i) MURDER:

Like adultery this had a limited sense; it did not mean just taking another's life. It was no offence, for instance, to kill a man from another village; on the contrary the killer had only proved to his people that he was fully a man to be able to go to another village with which there was no Okoven, and return home with a head as a trophy! Similarly death at a wrestling contest was no murder. Everybody felt sorry for the dead man, but the victor had committed no indictable offence. In those days when might was right (queerly in world politics even in the twentieth century, might IS STILL right!) murder meant the killing of a man or woman from the same village or killing a person from a village under the same Okoven.

Although the attitude of modern old men to the question "What did our forefathers do with murderers," is shifting and ambivalent, the one point of agreement is that in those days as now, a murderer at once forfeited his own right to live. He was sent on to Eguare where he became the property of the Onojie who was lord supreme. He went into the matter not with a view of a possible acquittal of the accused, guilty or innocent, but with a view of achieving equitable reparation to the family of the deceased, and to himself who had lost a subject! If the accused

had a slave, a child or junior brother he gave ONE HEAD IN PLACE OF THE ONE LOST to the family who was aggrieved while he himself remained at Eguare at the Onojie's pleasure. He might allow him to live as his slave, he might be sold or he might be killed. His farm and house were seized by the Onojie. This was the law in districts like Irrua, Uromi and Ewohimi which had the more autocratic Enijie. In other places like Ekpoma, Ugbegun etc. with less greedy and oppressive rulers, the accused was brought to Eguare and was led to the bush to die by self-hanging. No one must beat him or touch him lest he too became a murderer. He was merely led to the bush and advised on the quickest way to overcome the horror of self-destruction by hanging. The village to which the man killed belonged went to loot all the offender had. Sometimes if the deceased had powerful and influential relatives they went to loot the family of the accused.

In Irrua, particularly during Eromosele the Great's time (Abuede) it was not only the family of the criminal but his village of birth that suffered the looting leaving only the belongings of the immediate family of the deceased.

Killing a person from another village merely meant the killer had drawn his own village into an inter-village free shooting, and where the killer's village felt it was unprepared for war, it saved the situation by handing over the culprit to the angry village.

From the above it would appear as if Ishan Law on murder was confused and inadequate, since the treatment of murderers was not uniform or even definite anywhere. The cause of these apparent irregularities was the Onojie. Where he was powerful and dreaded his word was of course law and any murderer with all he possessed automatically became his property. The act also gave him an inroad to loot and plunder the village of the murderer. Where the Onojie was weak and constitutional, the dreaded Inotu—the strength of the masses, handled the matter, from trial to judgment. After trial preceded with terrifying war dance, the men did exactly what they wished. He might be killed on a stake, asked him to buy himself at an exhorbitant rate (NỌ DỌ DUBI), a rate very few men could afford as it ranged from 10 to 20 Ebo, about £7: 15: 7d but in modern value, equivalent to about £30 to £50, or the Inotu might sell him outright and share the proceeds.

There were other offences which Ishan native laws and custom classified as Capital offences like Murder; the punishments though, were not as severe as for all categories of murder. The seriousness of these crimes were admitted by the swiftness of the Edion who inflicted the prescribed punishments: For example:—

(*a*) *Ivio Ùvun* is the heinous crime of stealing the seed yams a farmer had already planted. This crime is equivalent to murder, not of the farmer alone but of all his family, since once a man had planted his yams he was sure of surviving the famine season, which is usually during the months of March to June. All the seed yams he has are planted and the rest are sold: that is the invariable Ishan custom; having planted his seeds he goes about other business while waiting for his yams to germinate. He may start to re-roof his house or he goes to hunt with the result that for a long time he may never reach his farm again; in fact what is more likely to bring him early to the farm will be the rains which signify time for corn planting. Thus in the olden days by the time a man got to his farm to discover that his planted seed yams had been stolen, it might be that other farmers had planted, sold or eaten their seed yams. That meant that he had been rendered useless for the year. There would be no hope of his getting yams which form

the mainstay of our diet in Ishan. He either had to go and be someone's servant or face the bitter prospect of a killing famine for himself and his family. Any wonder then that our forefathers visited such a crime with the severest punishment short of taking the offender's life!

(*b*) *Kneading Mud Over Another's Ijie:*

This was strictly forbidden. One's ancestral building site is one's IJIẸ or UEKẸN. Similarly the first person to build over a site owned that spot of ground which thus becomes his IJIE. If he left the house to build in another place within or without the village whether the house fell or not, he still had ownership of his old building site or Ijie. If anyone wanted to build there he must seek the consent of the owner and if he did otherwise it was a crime punishable by the Edion. But once he had given his consent to another man to build there, his ownership lapses. The site now belonged to the man who built on it last; hence people are very chary before granting permission to others to build on their Ijie.

(*c*) *Climbing an Oil Palm on which a man was already up:*

In short this meant that no two persons could be on the same palm tree at the same time, except of course, for the purpose of going to save the life of the first climber who might be in difficulties. For example, a man had climbed up a palm tree but got into trouble from losing one of the ropes (Ishans climb palm and coconut trees using two ropes), or losing his grips and hanging precariously, it would be the duty of any man having the means of climbing to go up to him and save him from a 50 feet drop. That would be commendable both before the eyes of the living elders and those of the departed forefathers. That which requires the blood of a goat to appease the spirits, in Ishan custom, is to climb up to a man in anger either to prevent his getting the fruits or wine or overtly to attack him. The punishment is swift and up till now, consists of slaughtering a she-goat at sight against the offender. As usual it is easier for the Edion in their dignity to add Elamen ea, this being the real benefit for the living!

(*d*) *One Hunter driving another from Egbai:*

Most good hunters have watching platforms (EGBAI). These are usually erected near the lairs of beasts. The hunter sits on the form waiting for the animal which is shot when it comes to rest, feed or have a drink. Now the hunter who builds the form owns it. But should he arrive to find another hunter usurping what belongs to him, Ishan law and custom forbid him challenging the usurper there and then. He must go home and report the matter to the Edion. Should he give a challenge there and they both return home alive, the punishment of the challenger would far exceed that of the thief, for our forefathers foresaw the possibility of two armed men fighting it out to a mortal finish in the jungle. Even if they did not kill themselves a watching platform is the very last place to have a brawl—for once the animals knew of the presence of human beings around their grounds they would never come near the spot again. That would spoil the chances not only of the quarrelsome hunters but of all the hunters in the village who might have succeeded in killing animals there. This would mean real loss to the Edion who might have got some free meat by virtue of their being Omijiogbe of the lucky hunters' families.

(*e*) *Tying Ojomen round a Farmland or another's house:*

The Ojomen has special significance amongst the Ishans. It could signify rejoicing while under different condition it could mean a taboo either for the sacredness of the object round which it had been tied or because that object has been cursed. Thus during some feasts e.g.

eating of the New Yam, the palm fronds in Ishan custom, are tied at every gateway and in the streets. That signifies great rejoicing in Ishan. But if a man does not want people to use a path after himself, he ties Ojomen across it. Or if he found a palm with ripe nuts and he does not want another man to reap them he ties Ojomen round the tree. In Ishan custom that ban is inviolable. Knowing the awe with which Ishans regard such a ban it is a great offence for a man to use Ojomen lightly. For example, during the beginning of the farming year, a man goes to tie Ojomen round a certain bush he himself has no intention of farming; by that action he has made a one-man law as prohibitive as if it were made by the most autocratic and dreaded Onojie in the land. In fact neither himself nor any other villager can farm on that parcel of land that year. Therefore if a man tied these fronds across the entrance of a house no one else will dare enter that house again. Truly have our ancestors viewed the irresponsible use of Ojomen with all seriousness. Such stupid acts in Ishan, are followed with the immediate slaughtering of a she-goat against the offender.

(*f*) *Abuses with the Genitals:*

It was strictly forbidden to curse a man with the genitals, particularly the female private parts which were up to this day reserved for warding off evils like epidemics befalling the village. Under such circumstances the village women gathered to curse the people with evil intents using the name of their organs; then and then only was the use of these parts for cursing another permissible. If a woman in anger used it against a man or worse still, against her husband, she drew a heavy punishment from the Edion.

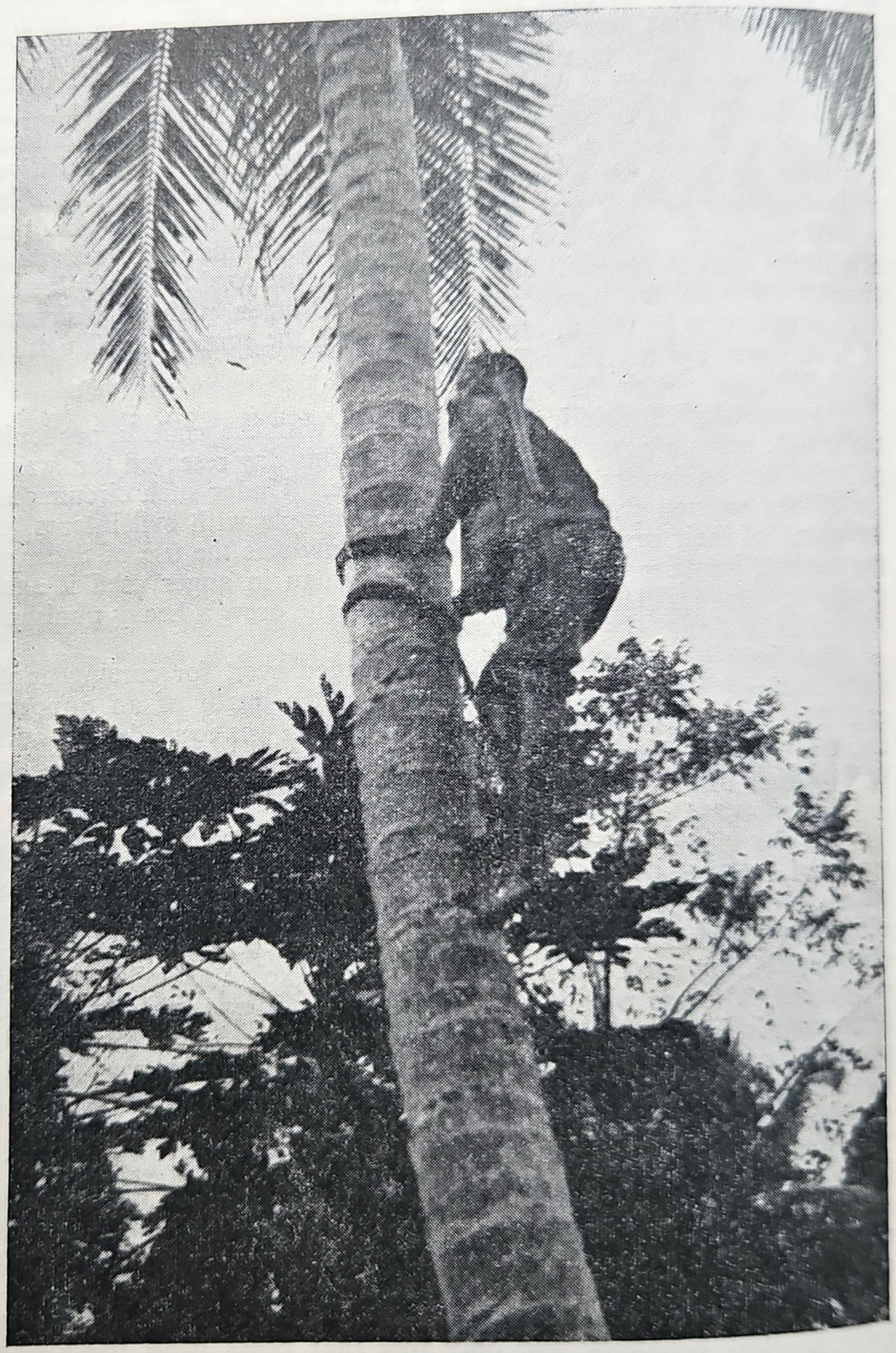
Similarly no justification can be pleaded ever, for cursing another with children or in any way wishing for the death of an opponent's children. The punishment for this crime which was equivalent to cursing another with the female genitals, was as severe as the Egbele could make it; Nothing but "Odewe bi Elamen ea" would satisfy the Elders.

(*g*) *Cutting of Kolanut Tree:*

To the Ishans it is practically correct to say that the Kolanut tree is sacred, for it bears the kolanut which is used at all occasions of purification, worshipping ancestors or juju, blessings, swearing on juju, revoking oaths, installation of Edion, etc. No host has welcomed a visitor until he has first apologised for the scarcity of kolanuts and then producing some. There is nothing to beat kolanut in converting a shy, glum gathering into one of active arguments. Even where they have been produced at the appropriate time and the correct man was asked to break them, there was bound to be some arguments over the age, clan or over ITEKPẸN (Correct Channel Finding!).

Usually with people of common descent, the oldest in the gathering breaks the nuts and since till this day, Ishans know no birth certificate and depend on wars fought or place farmed when someone was born, any attempt to decide the oldest in the gathering is followed by brisk arguments!

There was nothing in Ishan which one wanted to do that was complete without Kolanuts: the only tree that bears these precious nuts must itself be a treasure, hence to cut any such tree down was equivalent to doing the owner a grave harm, a wilful attempt to impoverish him. This is understandable when one realises that it takes up to 10 years for the tree to start bearing fruits. Even where the owner has given his witnessed consent for the tree to be cut down, as for example when it is standing over a building site, no one may cut it unless the owner holds the cutter's hand to make the first stroke!



Unlike the Urhobos the Ishans traditionally climb oil palm trees with ***two ropes — one across the right thigh and the other under the left foot.*** *It is a crime akin to murder to climb in anger to meet another* ***climber.***

CHAPTER IV

(A) The Laws of Inheritance and Adoption:

To the non-Ishan and even to us modern Ishans, some of the laws and custom affecting inheritance and adoption appear warped, primitive and senseless, but on taking a less cursory look, one would have to give credit to our simple and honest forefathers who seemed to make laws to protect man and property in all eventualities. Many of the laws have deep-rooted reasons and the apparent chaos modern Ishan finds itself today is a glaring testimony of a nation caught between quasi-European ill-understood custom and the desire to appear modern by wholesale disregard of the laws and custom that had guided us for centuries. Making things still more difficult is the shameless exploitation of Administrative Officers' handicap over Ishan language, laws and custom. There is a saying, followed with much laughter, that each Officer comes and goes with new interpretations of our laws! I admit that with each Officer come new interpretations, but the fault and shame are not with the Officers handicapped by the fact that they are required to rule a people whose laws and custom are quite different and in some cases, the exact antithesis of European or British Laws, but with our irresponsible and bribe-soaked Chiefs and Councillors who have the shameless knack of giving different interpretations to the same Ishan Law, to suit the case the Administrative Officer may be reviewing.

For example, in Common English Law, it is the duty of an animal owner to tie or fence up his animals to ensure that they do not wander off to do damage to other people's property. This is the exact opposite of traditional Ishan law: It is the duty of the property or farm owners to fence their farms to prevent cows, goats etc., which lawfully wander about feeding, getting into their farms, if near the village. According to this Ishan Law, therefore, no farmer had the right to kill a cow because it destroyed his unfenced farm. A new Administrative Officer just coming into the country was sure to put his foot in it, if he depended upon the swinging pendulum of Ishan Chiefs' interpretations of what was the correct law!

The greatest havoc is wrought by this class of irresponsibles misleading Officers on Ishan Laws and Custom affecting INHERITANCE. There was a time they told Administrative Officers that an issue from a betrothed woman belonged to the intending husband; but no Officer who has studied Ishan as such would be surprised if, reviewing similar cases on another day, was told by the very people that "ỌNỌ NẸ ẸKẸLE ỌMỌN, YAN ỌMỌN!" (He who pregnated a woman owns the issue!).

Therefore the difficulties of a sincere enquirer into these laws of inheritance, are well-neigh insurmountable without a resort to more concrete and tireless methods beyond the usual questions and answers. The enquirer must also bear in mind all the time that the insatiable acquisitive spirit of the Enijie influenced every law with particular reference to those of inheritance.

It will be more helpful to explain certain terms before these laws can be understood fully.

(1) Ọmọ Ọshọ: A child from a lover.

(2) Arebhoa: This was a well known practice amongst people of Ishan 'B'. To a lesser extent it was practised in the other parts of Ishan, but it was not as much a feature of the people as it was in Ewohimi and Ohordua areas.

An AREBHOA was usually a man's first daughter. She was not married out to a man. When she came of age she lived in her father's house where anyone she chose could keep her as a lover. All the issues of the association belonged to the girl's father. The natural father of the issues had one reward: uninhibited companionship at the girl's father's compound. Only the well-to-do men could afford to have daughters and not to make money out of them, for in Ishan custom the suitor paid the BRIDE PRICE, popularly called DOWRY, to the girl's father. In the case of Arebhoa no such price was demanded or paid, hence the natural father was merely a biological 'DONOR'!

For the poorer classes who wanted to achieve the same object of Arebhoa but could not afford to forego the bride price, there was a modification: it consisted of the acceptance of half the usual bride price by the father from the suitor; first an agreement was made that the marriage was going to be part-Arebhoa, and on this understanding the father accepted half the dowry. In this case the girl could go to the husband's place to live, for what mattered was the system of sharing the issues! The first issue of this rather queer marriage belonged to the father-in-law and if the marriage was blessed with many issues, a son and a daughter were returned to the father-in-law and when these later had issues of their own, a reciprocal return was made, *e.g.* from the original marriage a son, Oko and a daughter Otiti were returned to the father-in-law. When Oko had issues of his own he would return a boy while Otiti would return a girl to THEIR OWN NATURAL FATHER. Queer and stupid, if one had just a superficial look at the arrangement. Why did our forefathers of Ishan 'B' think of the system of Arebhoa or its modified form that went by the name of ỌMOGBẸ?

The reasons are to be found in Ishan's anxiety over ensuring perpetuity in a family, an attempt to curb extinction of an IJIOGBE or Uelen—the family unit. This could easily happen within two or three generations: Mr. A inherited the property and wives of his father; now A dies leaving only a daughter who was already fully married, *i.e.* the bride price had been accepted. According to Ishan custom, a woman is never allowed to come from her husband's place to inherit her father's property, so the male next-of-kin inherited the property and the door of A's father's house was shut for ever.

Now suppose A had made his daughter an Arebhoa; all the children of this woman, male and female, could have been his own children, so that on his death he could have had sons to bury him and inherit his property instead of its passing to another door. Still more important was the fact that an Arebhoa had the same right as a son: she could 'marry' wives who would be having issues for her and she could perform the burial ceremonies on her father's death, exactly as if she had been a male.

Thus where the system of Arebhoa and Omogbe was practised it was rare for a man to die without an heir and in such places the custom of the Onojie inheriting the property of an heirless man was practically unknown.

(3) ADEBHỌMỌN: This was a son a childless man or woman bought and adopted to the knowledge of his or her Egbele. On the death of the person such an adopted slave could perform the burial ceremonies of the adopter and inherit the property according to Ishan law and custom.

(4) OMIJIOGBE: This was the head, not by age, of the family or Uelen. It was a hereditary position in as much as each successor duly performed the burial ceremonies of his father, and in Uromi, he must

have performed the Ogbe ceremony too. The easiest definition of Omijiogbe is the FIRST SON OF THE FIRST SON traced from the progenitor of the family. On the death of the head of a family his FIRST SON went through the burial ceremonies and assumed the senior position of that family. His father's brothers, his own brothers and sisters, married and single, came under his control and once a year the men paid him homage as the keeper of the family ancestral shrine during ILUỌBO UKPE. In some parts of Ishan the term AKHẸOA (House watcher) was used synonymously as Omijiogbe. In Ekpoma area this position of Omijiogbe was held according to the age of members of the family—it went from one Odion to the next.

(5) ẸHALE (*Forehead*): A man's Ehale sometimes suffixed with NỌ ỌDIỌN (The First), is his first daughter, no matter whether she is the man's first child or not; what gives her that title and position of respect in the family is her being the FIRST female child of the father.

(6) BROTHER: There are two types — paternal and maternal; in Ishan custom the maternal type assumes a position of importance when it comes to the question of inheritance.

(7) ABIEKHE: This was common amongst sons of rich men. As soon as a son was born to a man, it was given a wife, also a child! As would be expected the girl matured before the boy and so she started to have children which customarily were the lawful children of the boy not yet up to the age of puberty! When he came of age the children he would get himself from this woman and other wives would be inferior in seniority to the ABIẸKHẸ—those "BORN TO WAIT" issues a wife got while her lawful husband was a minor! Sometimes some of these children were only a few years younger than their 'FATHER'!

(8) CHILDREN FROM LEGAL HARLOTS: I term these women 'legal harlots' for want of a better definition. Harlots they were though they were accommodated by Ishan laws and custom for the purpose of inheritance, which was the corner-stone of the family existence. A man who was incapable of having issues either through impotence, old age or some other handicap, called in his Egbele, slaughtered a goat at the ancestral shrine to exonerate his wives from blame and the sure ire of the departed spirits, should they commit adultery. From then on they were licensed prostitutes and all the issues from this promiscuous married life were the lawful children of the handicapped man. Thus it was no polyandry. The only limitation to the freedom the wives had thus got was that they must not cohabit with any member of the husband's family: they had to seek donors outside the husband's Uelen! To cut obvious psychological trauma to the absolute minimum, whoever the wives chose must remain unknown to their husband.

(9) ISSUES BY A WOMAN'S 'WIFE': This sounds perfectly dreadful and unbelievable but that was what it was and it was a widespread practice in Ishan. A childless but very rich woman not wanting her property to pass to her husband and desiring fitting burial ceremonies, 'married' a girl by paying the full bride price and bringing her to live with her. She was allowed to be 'kept' by any serviceable man of the guardian's choice. All the offsprings of this association were the lawful children of the rich woman, that is she was the legal though not the natural FATHER of the children! Again the man was merely a donor and for this privilege he gave the rich woman the services of a dutiful son-in-law.

Most of these customs had begun to die out in Ishan 'A' even before the coming of the white man, and with civilization even people of Ishan 'B' began to realize the psychological harm any suggestion of bastardy could inflict on innocent children, and so these arrangements forced

upon men afraid of dying without heirs lapsed without any formal annulment.

(10) ADOPTION: Adoption of a child must be done at the ancestral shrine and with the full knowledge of the adopter's Egbele. Before the Egbele Elders assembled he announced that he wanted to adopt, usually a junior brother by a different mother, as his son and heir. A goat was slaughtered, to make spirits of departed ancestors dead witnesses to the adoption! The flesh was shared with everybody wishing him well with his son. In the eyes of the living and the dead this boy had become his lawful heir. Should he have real sons later in life, these would be junior to the adopted son. Similarly a rich man could adopt a slave who could bury him and inherit his property. The one important proviso in the laws of adoption was that it must be with the sanction and knowledge of the Egbele; A goat slaughtered at the ancestral shrine was a MUST! In the same way to disinherit a son one had to do so by slaughtering a goat at the ancestral shrine.

With these terms explained I can now proceed to examine the laws of inheritance as they affected children, wives, property, titles etc., in Ishan of yester-years!

(B) Order of Inheritance:

Let it be understood at the onset that it was a basic Ishan law and custom that when a man died his property and all he possessed were inherited by his CHILDREN in the first instance. If he had no children then the right to inherit his property passed to his MATERNAL BROTHER. If he had no such brother then the eldest PATERNAL BROTHER was next in line of inheritance. Failing to have children, maternal and paternal brothers, the right to inheritance passed to the OMIJIOGBE of the Uelen. This Omijiogbe might be his uncle or a cousin.

(a) PROPERTY:

Basically the first son inherited the father's property and shared to any of his junior brothers and sisters AT PLEASURE. It is true that some brothers particularly the second and third could challenge his unfairness in taking everything to himself and report the matter to the Egbele. In this, the Egbele could only advise, they could not force the first son to part with what has come to him by right. Secondly no wise brother would inherit what had been relinquished by his senior brother under duress, for soon, as a result of he himself, wife or children falling ill, he would have cause to return to his elder brother to sue for peace: peace in this instance would only be possible after due reparation: removing the cause of the annoyance on his brother's side! Thus no junior brother can inherit any of his father's property unless with the full consent of his senior brother. Even property like houses, coconut trees etc., a father gave to the younger children in his lifetime, could be successfully demanded by the first son, unless the deposition was made at the ancestral shrine before the Egbele.

In practice though the first son would be well within his right to inherit everything without sharing to any of his brothers, for the sake of peace and harmony in the family, he and he alone gave something reasonable to some of his brothers. It also paid him to do so, for during the burial ceremonies of their father all those who had or expected something in the way of inheritance, were bound to assist him with money, goats or even cows depending upon the wealth of their dead father and the value of the property that came or will come into their possession.

Should the first son be a minor, the next of kin, maternal brother,

ordinary brother, or Omijiogbe in that order, would be the inheritor but it would be incumbent on him to take the minor as his ward and treat him exactly as his own child. He had the right to marry out any of the minor's sisters but it was his duty to marry wives for the boy and his junior brothers when they came of age. The ever constant fear of the swiftness of action of the departed ancestors over injustice or cheating made the inheritor particularly honest and so turned over the non-perishable property he had inherited when the heir grew up; in other words he had held the property in trust. It would be cheating the boy and the spirits, if he wilfully sold all the cows and goats and pocketed the money leaving nothing for him to inherit later. He could sell one or two for himself or sell all to get money to marry for the young man. What really mattered was that he must TREAT THIS BOY AS HE WOULD HIS OWN SON AND ALL HE HAD.

(b) WIVES:

The first son inherited all the wives except his own mother who was usually inherited by the uncle or the Omijiogbe. If neither wanted this woman, any old man in the Uelen would be asked to inherit her since it was against custom for any woman, not a daughter of the family to live as such, after she had become a widow (ẸI MIO OKHUO ẸLIMIN= Dead men have no wives!). If the man had many wives the first son at pleasure, and for the sake of harmony, would give some of them to the more senior of his brothers. If one of these wives was an Onojie's daughter, she went home free since an Onojie's daughter by custom was not inheritable. The reason for this was, in the olden days when the Onojie was a dignified monarch, he took no bride price from his sons-in-law; the princesses married for love. If any of them lost her husband and she did not want to leave her children in that village, whoever was to inherit her had to re-marry her by going 'TO SEE' the Onojie, with the strict understanding that whatever that sight might cost was no bride price!

(c) SISTERS:

All dues on sisters not yet married out fell to the first son. He married them out to anybody he liked and accepted the bride price. The yearly dues and services from husbands of sisters already married became his right.

(d) BROTHERS:

Those who had become men and shared from the father's property joined the heir in performing the burial ceremonies according to their means and what they inherited. They usually then after separated to build their own houses around the family house, or where there was friction, they moved out of the family Ijiogbe to any other part of the village. The junior brothers who were minors were taken in by the first son who they served as their father. It was his duty to care for them, pay their dues and taxes to the community and marry wives for them when they came of age.

(e) ECONOMIC TREES:

Kolanut, Dicanut, Coconut, Pear and Pepper-fruit trees, all formed inheritable property. They all became the property of the heir and if he was a minor, the next of kin took possession of them. But when the boy grew up the trees were handed over to him. Roofing Leaves plantations were treated in like manner.

(f) DOMESTIC ANIMALS:

Cows, sheep, goats, pigs and fowls became the property of the children. The first son had right over them, but if they were many he shared some of the animals with the more senior of his brothers. In a large family where the heir was wise and peace loving he shared such

property ACCORDING TO DOORS, that is, he ensured that at least one child of every wife the father had, had a share of what their father had left behind. Where the heir was a minor and the animals had been inherited by an Uncle, on coming of age the surviving herds were handed over. Like the products of economic trees he was free to sell or make use of them during the nephew's minority. As said already the Uncle or whoever it was that was acting for the minor owed it to his conscience and the fear of the ever-watching departed ancestors that he had very cogent and fair reasons for selling any of the animals, such as during famine, when he was involved in trouble or he wanted to do something that would be to the benefit of the rightful heir; but it would be quite unequitable for him to sell off all the heads of animals because he wanted to buy himself a chieftaincy title.

(g) DEBTS:

Assets and liabilities were in Ishan custom inheritable. A man's unpaid debt passes squarely onto his FIRST SON and to no one else. Like property, he must face the consequences of the debt alone with the difference that the other children of their father helped to pay the debt AT PLEASURE. There was only one way in Ishan custom by which he could avoid inheritance of his father's debt: If the father died leaving a huge debt which the heir did not want to face, all he did was to renounce his claim TO ALL INHERITANCE, property, wives and all! That of course included assets and LIABILITIES. Egbonughele then buried the dead man and since technically, the man had died without an heir, the Onojie inherited his property and liabilities; but since no one would go to demand payment of money owed from that feared member of the community, the debt became a BAD DEBT!

(C) System of Disinheritance:

A man could disinherit any of his children, usually in anger or as a result of sheer wickedness and repeated damage by the son, by slaughtering a goat at the ancestral shrine with the announcement that from then on such and such a son was no longer his son. If he did this and the quarrel was unsettled before his death, the next son would take precedence. Such a disinherited son had no claim to the dead man's property. Usually a son seeing his father in the mood that could take him thus to the ancestral shrine ran helter skelter round the Edion's houses to come and intervene. Invariably they came post-haste and poured oil on the troubled waters. If the goat had been killed before the arrival of the Egbele, the hasty and angry man was made to slaughter another goat to renounce all he had said. An appropriate fine was then inflicted on the stubborn son.

In the case of an Onojie's heir, this would not be permissible since two types of property were involved. There were the private family property and the state property or title which was not the holder's personal property, with the result that he could not do as he pleased with this latter. If he disinherited his first son, it was only in connection with the father's property; he had no authority over what happens to the Onojie title after he should have died. Were this safeguard not made, many Enijie could have made use of this power to wreak vengeance on their first sons with whom there was no love lost!

(D) Female Children:

The position or lack of position of female children is emphasised throughout in Ishan Native Laws and Custom and aptly expressed in the Ishan Idiom: OKHUO ILA AGHADA BHU UKU (A woman never inherits the sword!) or ẸI BIO ỌMOKHUO HẸỌLE IRIOGBẸ, literarily

meaning "You do not have a daughter and name her the family keeper!"

The woman could never be the family keeper. Whatever passed on to her passed on to her man, in other words the Ishans believed the daughter to be a drain on the family and hence should be disconnected by marriage, as quickly as possible. In Ishan Laws and custom particularly in Ishan 'A' where the system of Arebhoa was unfavoured, the family property was very jealously guarded against its possible passing into the hands of daughters.

In the laws of inheritance therefore, the woman had no place, in fact she was one of the inheritable properties! The respects paid to the Ẹhale nọ Ọdiọn, was superficial and only lasted the father's lifetime really. During the father's lifetime when he shared certain property, a thing rarely done except when the old man felt the end was near, and even then he had to be very careful what he shared and how he went about it, because OLINMIN YIYI ỌBE, ẸGBẸLE KHUALE LEA (The dead man makes bad laws but the living Elders overrule!), he might give something on the feminine line like Ivie (Coral Beads), Clothing, a goat etc., to the daughter. If he had a cow or even two he could not before he died successfully give one to the first daughter. When a father shared things like food, they were usually divided into two big lots; one for the sons who shared theirs in Odugha and the daughters irrespective of seniority, went to the women's quarters to divide theirs, obviously showing that they had no place in the main house or Odugha.

During the burial ceremonies however, the Ehale had a place, still far inferior irrespective of her age, to the first son's, whose place might be many, many years down according to age.

It was this attempt to keep property in the family that led to the custom of a woman, however wealthy, not being allowed to bury her father, since he who performed the ceremonies inherited the property. If she was very influential and her brothers were minors, she could prevail upon Egbele to allow her to perform these ceremonies, strictly on the understanding that she was only doing this because she did not want their father to remain unburied and that she did everything on behalf of her brothers. Another thing which was designed to preclude her from property inheritance was the custom which forbade the woman from handling Ukhure; since she could not do this, she could not take possession of the family shrine and hence she could not pretend to perform the burial ceremonies and hence own the family property.

If she was the only child of her father, the next male in line of succession stood to perform the burial ceremonies, the woman and her wealth fading away behind, so that after the ceremonies she had no claim to property.

The laws of inheritance as they affect women need some qualification as regards being an Arebhoa and being the only child of a dead person.

(*a*) *Arebhoa:* As already said an Arebhoa was equivalent to a son. She could perform the burial ceremonies and inherit all the father's property except the Title if he had any, and the wives, of course. In this case the reason for forbidding other types of daughters having this right is satisfied; although an Arebhoa, a woman had inherited property, she and all she inherited did not leave the family.

(*b*) *Property of a Woman:* When a wife died her property was inherited by her children. If she has an only child and already married, she came home, performed the burial ceremonies of her mother and inherited what she left behind. But if the woman had no issue the husband inherited her possessions.

(E) Property of a Man with no Next of Kin:

Outside of a slave I have been quite unable to find an example of a man dying in Ishan without a next of kin since the village community was organized on patrikin system; thus it was impossible for a 'FREE-BORN' of the village to die without a living Cousin, however distant. The term, 'without a next of kin' in Ishan tradition, is therefore a very limited term, perhaps, to WITHOUT HEIR, which itself was limited to WITHOUT A SON.

In districts traditionally "blessed" with the most autocratic Enijie like Irrua, Uromi and Ewohimi, the property of any man dying 'without a next of kin' passed onto the Onojie. In actual practice this meant anybody dying without a son. Favour-seeking informants or evil-minded men wanting to get their own back on a dead man, were always quick to go and make a report to the Onojie that such and such a man had died without a heir. A message was at once fired to the titled man of that village demanding ẸVALA LE which meant the dead man's farming Matchet and Hoe, the euphemistic way of saying ALL HE POSSESSED IN THIS WORLD, including unmarried daughters! As recent as 1895, a few years before the white man came with more balanced law and order, Idiata, an influential Okhaemon in Agwa Irrua, died leaving only a daughter called Ebodẹ. Despite the fact that this was a chief himself, all his property, including Ebode, was engulfed by the acquisitive EROMOSELE!

In most other Ishan districts, my enquiry revealed that it was only a slave whose home could not be traced that died without a next of kin; the property of such a man could be taken by the Onojie, but even then, the reason for this was sheer greed and oppression: in those days, how could a slave die without a 'next of kin'? He must have been owned by somebody otherwise he was no slave!

However it was the desire to avoid the long tentacles of the Octopus who ruled at Eguare as Onojie, that led to Arebhoa, Adebhomon, children from legal harlots etc.

(F) Property of a Murderer and Suicide Case:

In those wicked days when the Onojie was the unbridled autocrat, a murderer not only forfeited his right to live but he and all he ever possessed with the instrument like Gun or Matchet used for the crime, automatically became the Onojie's property. He might have paid heavily to the Onojie, Inotu and the aggrieved family but the best he could get was that his life was spared as the Onojie's slave. There are today living examples in places like Irrua and Uromi of men now living in Eguare as a result of homicide.

For example of what happened to murderers, round about 1890 when the youthful Eromosele made himself a nightmare to his subjects at home and a dreaded enemy abroad, his royal Surgeon (Owena) called Idaẹta came to make a report at Eguare Irrua that Orii of Idumoghodo in Uwessan had caused the death of his only son, who as a matter of fact had died after a protracted natural illness. Orii, a very rich, influential and much liked man, was sent for by the Onojie, Eromosele. Knowing what his fate would be if he went to Eguare and he dared not refuse to go, Orii began to buy himself! He sent two of his children, male and female! the Onojie accepted these with thanks and reminded him that he wanted to SEE HIM. He added more of his family until he had sent 14 persons, that is 7 of each sex; each human being sent was accompanied with Ebo or Uje nearly 19,000 Cowries worth thousands of our pounds in those days! Finally the great Eromosele sent that he

was then satisfied and asked Orii to come for a formal burying of the hatchet and blessings. Wealthy Orii went to Eguare fortified with more gifts in money and human presents. These were encouragingly accepted at Eguare but he was immediately tied up on the wooden cross to die a slow and shameful death at the present Usugbenu junction. Of course having been killed for an alleged murder his property automatically passed on to Eromosele, lord supreme of Irrua!

This heartless act and the forceful inheritance of the property of Ikhalea of Usenu who had died without an heir, were the last straw and rightly drew the ire of all Irrua who took up arms against their king: the great Eromosele fled to Ehizojie of Illeh!

A man who had taken his life was, in Ishan custom, a murderer of himself, and appropriately, if the attempt to take his life failed, he was tried for attempted Murder. If his plan succeeded, all his possessions like those of a murderer, passed to the Onojie. The punishment for attempted suicide was the slaughtering of a She-goat at sight, by the Edion.

(G) **The Law of Inheritance as Influenced by the Onojie:** As I have said, practically every Ishan law, in many cases, was made or modified either to please or protect the Onojie, less often to appease the spirits of the departed ancestors, and by chance, for the common good. Since the wheels of the Onojie grounded more swiftly, more mercilessly and on the living, those who were affected by the laws feared the Onojie more than the unseen and slow-acting spirits. That was horse sense!

Originally therefore the laws of inheritance particularly regarding murderers, suicides and childless people were different as could be seen from those that obtained in districts which were lucky not to have had such tyrants as Ogbeide or Eromosele of Irrua, Okolo or Ogbidi of Uromi, Ehiemua of Ewu, Odia of Ewohimi, Usifo of Ubiaja etc. Unfortunately, those lucky districts, where the true Ishan custom existed, were few and inconsequential.

When a man killed another man in the same town or village, the Inotu or Otu gathered at the village where the man died. The criminal was demanded with a terrifying war dance. He was tried with a view of knowing what category of murder it was. If it was in self-defence, he might escape with a fine but for all other categories, the murderer suffered the supreme penalty: after dancing him round the village, he was led to the edge of the village where he was directed to hang himself. If the crime was a grotesque or savage one he was mercilessly treated as a deterrent to all onlookers before he was tied up alive to die on the stake. His house, farm and everything in his family were looted. In some cases, the Inotu who were really law unto themselves, over serious criminals, sold the murderer and shared the proceeds. If he came from an influential family he was asked to buy off himself; he produced a man or woman depending upon the sex of the murdered man, to replace the loss in the aggrieved family, and after settling accounts with the Inotu he was set free penniless — a bewildered penitent!

(H) Inanimate Criminals: In their simplicity, the Ishans regarded a law breaker particularly if a life was lost in the breaking, as a criminal deserving a fair trial and a just punishment if guilty, be the law breaker living or inanimate. Thus if a wall fell and killed the occupants of the house, the wooden lintle (UHANHAN) was 'arrested' as the murderer. The dreaded and ubiquitous Inotu seized it, and followed with a war dance, the lintle was taken to the Onojie. If the branch of a tree

fell and killed a man, this was reported to the Onojie who directed that the tree be cut down. A log of it was cut and placed in the village square and on this people might sit at village meetings or assemblies.

For example, in September 1953, the titled man of Akho Irrua, Chief Uwague, fell off his kolanut tree and died instantaneously. An argument arose amongst the villagers as to what was the correct treatment for the tree. The tree was finally cut down, the Akho elders maintaining that that was what Ishan custom prescribed. Two months after, a boy fell off an orange tree at Ewu and died. The tree was also cut down. Some years before this, a man fell from a coconut tree at Ewohimi. The tree became the Onojie's property. The Ewohimi interpretation was correct.

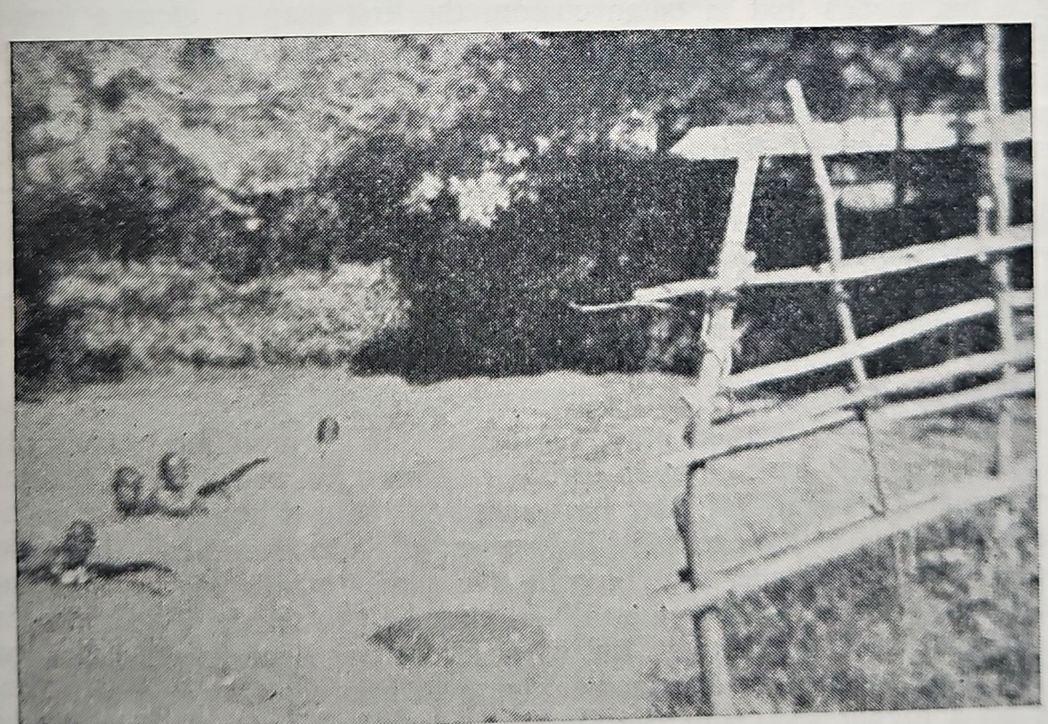
This is supported by the Inotu, the only near effective challenge the Onojie ever had, sending a useless Lintle to the Onojie at Eguare. In the same way a human killer or a tree that caused a man's death, became the Onojie's property. It is no excuse to say the Enijie influenced basic laws to suit themselves. If what a tribe normally does is their custom, what is Law? As I see it, a law is a common agreement, which must be obeyed or risk punishments, made by the leaders of a community for the common good. But that is not all; it needed enforcement, hence policemen, Magistrates, Judges and prisons of modern times. In ancient Ishan (AGBỌN ỌBA), the Onojie was the judge, the magistrate, the policemen and prison, all put together. He was the supreme custodian of laws, limbs and property: *he was the law*!

Therefore strictly speaking, in native laws and custom, the Ewohimi interpretation must be correct. In addition the wise elders of a village knew that it was safest for them to report all accidents, loss of lives etc., to the Onojie at Eguare lest they be accused of killing somebody.

Now to come to a conclusion about Ishan laws and custom affecting inheritance. I have above given the picture as it appeared on both sides —the Onojie's and the republicans' sides. Now on which side was LAW? To answer this question which would be my conclusion, I give a modern analogy. The state makes a law. A man breaks it and he is arrested by a policeman. He is tried by a Magistrate and sent to gaol. If the man is not satisfied he appeals his case to the Judge. If the Supreme Court confirms the sentence of the Lower Court, and the prisoner is still not satisfied, he appeals to W.A.C.A. If the prisoner still feels that he has not got justice, he appeals to Privy Council. If this authoritative body should still find against him—well? A desperado might address a petition to the Sovereign of Britain. If he is lucky to get a reply which confirms the original sentence—he has had it! He has got to go and serve the sentence. In the picture I have thus drawn the person who had the final say or appeal is LAW, in this case, the Privy Council or in the case of the desperado—the King or Queen. On this side of heaven, no further appeal! Whatever judgment the individual who had the last appeal gave MUST HAVE TO BE LAW. Similarly in ancient Ishan, a man was tried by the Inotu. The Onojie, of course, never attended meetings of commoners, but he had a veto power over their decisions; if the accused man's voice was loud enough and he was quick enough to get to and "SEE" the Onojie, to hell with the decision of the dreaded Inotu, which after all was composed of individuals that could be liquidated by a cunning Onojie. In any case, right from the family head through the Council of Edion and up to the Inotu, the final appeal lay with the Onojie. Therefore his word or his interpretation of laws and custom went as law. An enquirer might counter

with the observation that this was morally unjust and ethically oppressive: true, but he must remember the basic law in the world, civilized or primitive—MIGHT IS RIGHT !

(I) **Death by Drowning :** There were other inanimate forces that could bring about the death of a man, e.g., the POND, or village water reservoir from which both man and domestic animals quenched their thirst. For people of Ishan 'A', it was their only source of water supply during the rainy season. Now if a defeated neurotic went and drowned himself in the village's only source of water, the pond was not treated as a murderer. It was adjudged innocent, in that it would never have caused anyone's death if a blundering Idiot had not fallen into it! It was quite incapable of throwing the man back out of water, so the pond was not bailed out nor did it become the Onojie's property. The suicide was taken out and ASHES were thrown into the pond: fater that everybody was again free to make use of the water.



The Village Source of Water: THE POND. It is also the children's Swimming Pool!

CHAPTER V

LAND TENURE

LAND in Ishan was strictly COMMUNAL and held in trust by the Onojie for his people. It could neither be sold nor bought. If there was a dispute over a piece of land in the village, the Edion looked into it and effected a settlement. If it was a dispute involving two villages, the Onojie decided the matter.

1. Ownership:

There was a system of understood ownership, for example,

(i) THE MARKET PLACE: This like the Palace grounds, constitutionally belonged to the Onojie, in his office.

(ii) BUILDING SITE: A man owned the piece of land on which he had his house. This land with the cleared area around it belonged to him and his children. If he left it to go and build somewhere else within or without the village, no one else had the right to build on the site which thus had become the man's Ijie, or Iteken or Ijiogbe. If the house had fallen down and the place had gone bush, the old building site or ITO-LUWA or ICHUWA was still his sacred possession. No one had the right to go there without his expressed permission, but once he had given his permission his claim to that piece of land lapsed. Although a man owned his Ijie or Iteken, he could not sell it to another villager or stranger. In the case of Ijiogbe, the ancestral Ijie, the statutory owner was the Omijiogbe.

(iii) FARM LAND:

The basic law over farm land was that HE WHO FIRST FARMED A VIRGIN FOREST, A LAND HITHERTO UNCLAIMED, OWNED IT. That means that in Ishan custom the first man to clear a forest, cut down the trees for the purpose of farming, owned it over generations. This is expressed as ỌNỌ GBẸGBO YANLẸN ẸGBO. The piece of land thus acquired became a family property, passing from father to son. If the owner left it to farm somewhere else no other farmer could go there for farming without permission of the first farmer. Even where this consent was given, at the end of the farming year, the land reverted back to the owner after the new man had taken off his crops. The man seeking permission to farm had no right to plant economic trees or permanent crops like pear trees, dicanuts, etc.

2. System of Leasing Land:

The system depended upon the lessee. If an individual came into a village, he must have come in through a friend, an in-law or to become a rich man's servant. If later he wanted to build a house, the man he had come to live with, leased him a piece of land near his own house. If a number of people, say three to five came together from the same district and wanted to live in a village, they had to tell the Edion who, in this case, formed the lessor. But where there was a wholesale migration of a village to another district belonging to another Onojie, the matter was on a higher level and the Onojie had to be informed. He, as the custodian of the communal land, had to give a parcel of land on which the new community settled. For example when the people of Unea deserted Otua, they first came to Akho and when it was necessary for them to have an abode of their own the then Ojirrua gave them a parcel of land which today contains the virile people of Unea.

Should any of these various categories of lessee quit, the land reverted back to the lessor. Outsiders, either individually or collectively, who had been accepted could be adopted into a lineage and secure land rights as full members of the community.

Oil palms on the land were common property. Any climber could harvest the nuts so long as the trees were not actually in another man's farm, for fear of damaging his yams etc.

3. Land Boundaries: Okoven System:

No one knowing something about inter-village boundaries in Ishan would fail to be impressed with the rarity of land disputes: it was either due to the cool-headedness of Ishans as a race or due to the vastness of land.

Land was demarcated by OKOVẸN (COMMON OATH) and existed between two adjacent villages. Two such villages in the olden days, wanting to live in peace with their neighbours, made their desires known to each other and on an appointed day, came together at a spot on the path connecting the two villages. They then took the oath of friendship, kinship and non-aggression. From then on they treated each other as kindreds—no wilful destruction of each other's property, no taking of each other's wives, and they swore never again to cause each other any injury capable of drawing blood, this latter being expressed as 'Not seeing each other's blood.'

It was a most binding oath. The spot at which the oath was taken was the ALUOKOVẸN, usually marked with an UKHIMIN TREE. This Aluokoven formed the boundary between the two villages. The Egbonughele of each village cleared the inter-village road up to this spot. Thus far things were simple, but the hard thing was that the boundary was known definitely only along the road or path. Outside this road, the boundary was anybody's guess! All that mattered was that each seemed to have kept to its own side of the Okoven, and in the bush they farmed in concord since they were then members of the same stock, by oath.

Thus if there was a land dispute between Uromi and Ugboha, the nearest villages of Uromi and Ugboha with their various Aluokoven would be used and a rough line drawn. Until modern times when people ceased to believe strongly in the power of the departed spirits and the sure destruction following false oaths on juju, the Okoven system kept people honest and rarely even bore false witness against one another. Also the system brought such a strong feeling of sincerity and brotherhood that many described the existence with "they are our brothers," even though but for the Okoven they might have been as related as all the descendants of Adam!

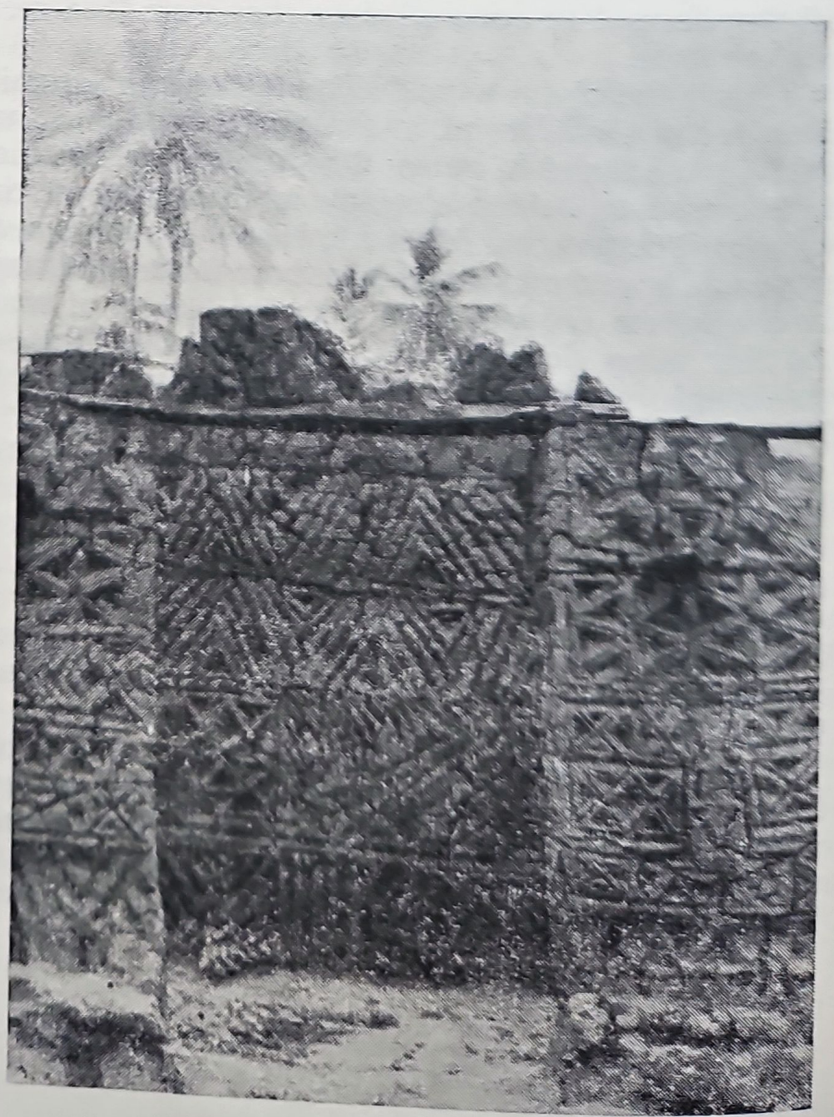
With the advent of the whiteman and civilization, however, the hitherto, easily satisfied Ishans knew the powerlessness of the departed ancestors and also, how easy it was for one to gain one's end by a false testimony. Things which before could be decided in a matter of minutes by the introduction of oaths on juju or shrines, got more confused and difficult to settle. An example of this is given by the great land dispute between Eromosele the Great and his equally famous father-in-law, Akhigbe of Agbede, in 1910.

As I have said already the demarcation of land between two villages was the Okoven. This meant that along the road the boundary was known but beyond that the land was no man's land or common property used with respect for the Okoven. Many years before 1910, Itepu and Ukokobili of Atuagbo went and made a camp on Oguaran Land between

Atuagbo the last village of Irrua and Agbede. When a dispute arose later over this settlement, the land being claimed by Akhigbe with all his influence and the land with all the inhabitants by the insatiable Eromosele, instead of the usual simple method of Okoven, the matter went up to the District Commissioner at Ubiaja and after a drawn out harangue the land was given to Irrua; but by then the traditional friendship between Agbede and Irrua, following Eromosele's conversion into Mohammedanism by Akhigbe, had been ruined. Bad blood had been so created that when Akhigbe died 3 days after the decision over the land it was generally believed that this was the evil work of Eromosele, an unforgiving enemy!

4. Ilu Oto:

This was the earth worship. When the farm yields were getting poor, there were increasing sickness and deaths in the land or the Native Doctor had at a mass consultation (IKHUEBỌ), divined that the earth had been fouled, then the earth needed purification. Every village of the district had to subscribe to the cost of buying the materials required for the purification. It was the duty of the Ihaza to go round and collect each village's share. This done the actual worship and purification of the earth was done by the most senior or oldest settlement of the district. This needs explanation: in all districts of Ishan Eguare is taken to be senior not because of its age but because it is the seat of the Onojie. Usually there was a settlement in existence before the arrival of the more superior settlers, whose leader became the Onojie. Despite the domineering attitude and the overshadowing of the indigenous inhabitants, the importance of the original settlement was acknowledged by their being made the 'caretaker' of the earth on which the district had settled. Examples? Ihumudumu in Ekpoma, Akho in Irrua, Ehalen Oniha in Ewu, Egbele and Unuwazi in Uromi, Idumabu in Ugboha, Idumu-Oshodin in Ubiaja etc.



DESERTED RUINS IN UKHUN, but they marked a man's cherished IJIE. The walls show the old Ishan decorations in mud.

CHAPTER VI

MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES

1. A Man Takes a Wife:

Strictly in Ishan custom there were three ways by which a man could come to have a wife: by betrothal, by the dowry system and by inheritance.

(i) By Betrothal (Ebe-e):

This was the commonest, the surest, the supposedly cheapest and the cause of all our ills and confusions in the Native Courts of today. A man could 'beg' for the hand of a girl from conception to the age of 5. Seeing a woman pregnant the man would send her a log of firewood (for night heating since the mud houses are very cold), and say, "May the departed spirits deliver you safely, but if the child should be a girl, I beg for her hand in marriage." The man might be anything up to 60 years in age!

Should the pregnant woman have a baby-girl, he renewed his request with minor presents like logs of wood, yams, etc. There might be two, three or more prospective suitors asking for THIS FOETUS' hand ! The mother and father at this time usually were quite non-committal. In places like Ebelle, on the hair washing day, that is when the baby is 3 months old, the man invited to help pound the foufou for the ceremony knew that he had been accepted, and he could afterwards come to ask for the girl's hand formally. In most other places by the time the girl was 5, it was time to get serious with the request, and one took a calabash of palm wine, passed through a middleman, usually the girl's uncle or cousin or Godfather, and came up to "salute the father." A discrete man said nothing on that day, he was merely on a reconnaissance greeting! A few market days after, he repeated his visit, with perhaps, a bigger keg of palm wine. Then with much head-scratching and much speaking in parables and ancient idioms, the 'go-between' informed the father the object of their mission! The palm wine was despatched by those present and the suitor given the usual Ishan non-committal answer of "I HEAR" followed with the equally non-committal "I shall convey your request to my master;" the speaker might be the Omijiogbe, the virtual owner of all in the Uelen! This type of visit was repeated several times until his tenacity was rewarded with acquiescence. From that moment on he had bought an object for which he would continue to pay until "DEATH DO THEM PART." There was no actual monetary bride price demanded, but ever so often he brought the mother firewood, water during the dry season, yams frequently, and to the father, palm wine, often gave free labour in his farm or came to assist during the house building season. The more he made himself generally useful, the happier the marriage turned out to be. There was no question of whether the poor girl liked her suitor or not, if she understood what all the 'goings-on' meant at all; in fact she was often unaware of the arrangements until she was coming of age. A sensible girl, therefore knowing the odds against her, would as well make up her mind to develop a liking for her husband to be, who had virtually become a servant of her family.

Once a year during the Community Festival special presents were made to the father (a bundle of 7 yams and a calabash of palm wine), to the mother, yams and a calabash of oil, and to the girl, beads, cloth etc. By the time the girl was 10—15 when the intended husband must have been nearly bald from carrying loads to his future father-in-law's house, he must have spent well over Ebo Isẹn, a hellish lot of Cowries

numbering about 94,000 but in modern money, equal to £1: 18: 9d. He could then start a gentle agitation for his wife to be sent to him.

On the long run this method of marriage was more expensive but it commended itself to everybody because of easier payments, spread over 5 to 15 years, and an Ebee was a tamer, more lovable, more trustworthy and more manageable wife than any other type.

(ii) THE DOWRY SYSTEM:

The system of paying bride price was rarer but was the more lucrative system for the father and only the well-to-do could leave their daughters to grow before marrying them out. The patient father asked and got a heavy sum of money, cash down, for his grown up daughter. This was between ẸBO EA and ẸBO ISẸN, although some Shylocks asked for the astronomical figure of ẸBO IHINLỌN which was about 133,000 Cowries, requiring about 7 hefty men to carry.

Although this system gave the father an avenue for money, it had its drawback. The girl who by then was between 10—15 years old, had got to the age when, despite her sex, she could pick and choose or more correctly, she could express her likes and dislikes. She could refuse a man despite her bags of Cowries because of his ugly one eye, or a limp, habitual drunkenness etc. In practice, however the girl was forced and carried on men's shoulders with fruitless wailings, to the husband's house, and for the next three months the unhappy husband and his relatives had to stand guard over their bride, lest she bolted away! In Ugboha the dreaded JUJU Masquerader was the effective messenger who led the protesting damsel to her unwanted husband.

Instances were many when the confounded husband after trying all methods of bribes and appeasements in vain, resorted to a bestial mode of cohabitation: the strong men of the family gathered, held the girl down and a grotesquely unnatural husband and wife relation was effected. The idea was to consumate the marriage and get the girl pregnant at all costs. Once so she would be afraid of offending the departed spirits as she would surely do, if while carrying a man's child she was thinking of deserting him, which was equivalent to thinking evil of him. Then when she had had the baby the chances, in Ishan expression, were "THAT HER EYES WOULD COME DOWN!" What else could she do?

(iii) BY INHERITANCE (EGBASE OF ISHAN 'A', IZỌ, ISHAN 'B'):

This was marriage by chance and was relished only by the poor and primitive, particularly when the woman to be inherited was old or evil looking.

When a man died, the wife, if she was not an Onojie's daughter, was inheritable after due burial of the father by the first son. If she was the father's only wife and the heir's mother, then an uncle or Omijiogbe or the nearest patrikin, inherited her. If there were many wives an heir who might not have been able to marry a single wife of his own, would suddenly find himself the owner of several wives. He could pick the younger and more beautiful ones, 'dash' some to his junior brothers and ask those he did not want in the family to refund the dowries on them. Rarely some of the women who were asked to go and refund dowry, were unwilling to leave their children; in that case if there was no one to inherit them the Egbele gave them an open licence at the ancestral shrine. Such women were free to do whatever they liked as long as they did not bring open dishonour to their children's family.

Until more recently this system of marriage was not practised in Ekpoma. As soon as a man died the wives, particularly the childless

ones, went to their homes. This Ekpoma custom arose in an attempt to curb the true behaviour of next of kins who used to be more anxious for what was likely to be inherited rather than do all in their power to save the sick man.

2. Method of Inheritance (Uhanmi):

Although active mourning in Ishan custom was over by the 14th day, it was against tradition to inherit a woman before the third month. After the woman had ended mourning for her husband, she might go and stay with her parents or may stay in her husband's place, with her children. She had to be in her husband's place the day of inheritance. The Edion of the Egbele were invited by the heir and told that he wanted to inherit his father's wife or wives. A goat was slaughtered at the ancestral shrine to formally inform the long line of dead ancestors that from that day on the woman in question had become his wife. He then stepped across the woman's extended legs, a thing that is adulterous if done to a woman not one's wife. Whether there were two or more wives, it required just one goat to inherit them all.

Before the formal inheritance, the intending inheritor must have gone to the woman's parents or guardian for ITEKPẸN, arrangements to smoothen the way! He went to them with a calabash of palm wine and cash, ELAMẸN EA or 2,800 Cowries now equivalent to 1/2d.

A woman who had lost her husband must be inherited in this way within three months or she became a free woman; if nobody to inherit her and she insisted on staying to look after her children the freedom from Egbele had to be given on the day the other wives were inherited. Any sharing of the wives for the other brothers also had to be done on the same day.

Princesses, whether daughters of the ruling or dead Enijie, were not inheritable. The reasons for this were that they were married without any payment of Bride Price and, secondly, their noble birth made them marry as far as was possible, for love. They could not be forced to marry the heirs to their late husbands; such heirs might be unbefitting. It will be seen later that the Onojie, not taking bride price for his daughters was not particularly magnanimous: he married their mothers without paying a Cowry!

3. Pawning or Pledging:

Marriage sometimes followed this system which in the main, was disguised slavery. A person could pawn himself, his son or more often, his daughter, to raise funds either when he was in trouble or needed money badly to pay a troublesome creditor. The pawn had to perform any given duties, the services being considered as interest for the creditor. The person pawned could not be released until the capital had been paid fully. Where a man pawned his daughter for a big amount, he might never be able to redeem her before she came of age. The creditor might then take the girl as his wife, making appropriate deduction in lieu of this. The poor girl just had no choice!

4. Re-Marriage After Divorce:

Legal decree of annulment of marriage scarcely had a place in pure Ishan custom. A woman once married tended to live in that family until death. No one else in a community of same patrilineage could take a wife from another. In fact it was adulterous even to touch the cloth of a married woman. Neighbouring villages were likely to be under the Okoven system. Therefore if a woman wanted to leave her

husband she might run to her parents, but anyone who married her had virtually declared war on the family of the former husband, in particular, and the whole village in general. A head or two might drop for this careless act of love! No, the consequences were such that a wise woman would think seriously before deserting her lawful husband. For instance, once she left that village it was goodbye for her and her children! She was sure of being seized if she succumbed to the torments of returning to see them, let alone, that it would be tantamount to adultery for her to return to her former husband's compound. To crown the episode that was bound to follow careless switching of husbands, if a life was lost as a result of her desertion, custom decreed that she herself automatically became the Onojie's wife!

The truth then was that divorce was unknown. If a woman bolted and the husband was a weakling or without a family, she was a total loss. If he was bold but without a family, he sought out the whereabouts of his ex-wife and went head-hunting in that village. For example, round about 1890, Iyinbọ, the beloved wife of Akhimiẹ, heir to the renowned Ikhumun of Imule, Illeh—Ekpoma, deserted her husband and went to marry Erọanga, the brother of Okougbo of Akho, Irrua. Okougbo himself was an equally valiant man and an Okakulo of his village. One day while the Illeh Inotu were in a meeting, Okougbo bluffingly walked in with a loaded gun and fired it aside. Someone in the gathering told Ikhumun that what Okougbo implied was that they had seized his son's wife, and so what! This very much wounded the pride of the great Ikhumun and that night he and a few dare-devils of Imule went head-hunting in Okougbo's village of Akho. They cut their way into Okougbo's compound and a bloody free-shooting followed. Eroanga, the man who seduced Iyinbo, was shot by a man called Ikpefua, who then fled for his life since he had accomplished the major aim of the expedition; in the excitement, he collided head-on with a palm tree, and passed out, but he recovered in time before he was discovered by the enemies; he then made his way home, but died seven days after, and I can safely say, from Cerebral Haemorrhage!

The avenging Ikhumun, now satisfied, also ran for his life but running at night in a strange village infested with gun-toting enemies equally thirsty for his head, fell into a pond and was picked up next morning drowned! Thus for the reckless action of one woman, two villages, Illeh and Akho, lost some of their finest head-hunters!

That was not all; Eromosele's long arm stretched out to fish in troubled waters. Iyinbo, for whose sake a life had been lost in his domain, automatically according to Ishan custom, became the Onojie's property. Such a frivolous woman was not fit as a wife for the great Eromosele and so Iyinbo in trying to have a change of husbands, got sold as a slave!

What followed attempt to leave a husband could be more sweeping depending upon the standing of the first husband. Where he was a man of great affluence, it was war between his people and the village that gave refuge to his wife. The case of ỌMAMOJE, the mother of the great Eromosele's heir—Momodu or Osobase, which led to the GREAT IRRUA—UROMI WAR of 1892 makes this point clear.

THE GREAT IRRUA—UROMI WAR, 1892-3:

ỌMAMOJE was a daughter of a Prince of Uromi who was a brother of the then Onojie of Uromi. When she had had Osobase, the first son of Eromosele, the Onojie inhumanly told her that that was enough for her and she was left to pine away uncared for in the harem. Unable to continue suffering in her youth, in 1892 she fled to her home, Uromi,

In the Ishan of old, divorce was quite uncommon. The thoughtless attempt of a woman to change husbands brought the Village Head-hunters into an ominous line !

REMINISCENT OF PRE-WHITEMAN DAYS!

In July 1954, *an EBHOATO man residing in Benin City traced his estranged wife to IDUNSELU-EWATTO. In that village four heads fell and four others were grievously butchered. The father-in-law's house (seen above) was sacked and burnt!*

and to make matters worse for her and her home, got married! That was more than a cheek for Eromosele, the man who 'never drank water unless it was boiling!' War broke out between Irrua and Uromi, with Obeidu bearing the brunt of the free shooting. So too was Ivue. Uromi, that land of great warriors, was thoroughly outraged and she decided to settle these skirmishes once and for all; she prepared a great army to come and sack Irrua on a certain date. Unfortunately a traitor came and hinted War Leader Eimiuhi (after whom Eko was named). He in turn went and informed his overlord Eromosele. All able-bodied men in Irrua were gathered and before dawn on the day Uromi planned to pay a liquidating surprise attack on Irrua, the Irrua Army infested all the bush near Obeidu like Driver Ants. Then came columns and columns of Uromi warriors, sufficient to drop all the heads of Eromosele's subjects before an 'OGOGO KHO-O' could be cried in the Eguare Square! These were allowed to pass and then Irrua attacked from behind. Realising that it would be foolish to run forwards towards Irrua, Uromi turned backwards only to be mowed down with matchets and Dane Guns. It was a blood bath for Uromi. The great AKAIKAWO of Uromi was captured by OJEAGA of Eidenu and that very evening he died on the stake in Eguare, Irrua.

Realising the gravity of his loss in men and leaders, Okolo, the then Onojie, sued for peace. Eromosele agreed to his terms of peace which consisted of a woman to die in place of Princess Omamoje, one of Okolo's daughters, as a wife in lieu of the deserting Omamoje, the return of Omamoje herself, and the son she had by this time got at the new husband's place — all making four heads in place of one run-away woman!

Ẹruigbe, the woman sent to replace the head of Princess Omamoje at the executioner's stand, was so beautiful that the influential Queen Mother, Ebuade, successfully begged for her life to be spared. Unuẹbholo, the Princess Okolo sent, was of course appropriated as a wife while both Omamoje and the son were then taken back into the harem. She was fully forgiven as evidenced by the fact that she later had a daughter named IKHẸILẸN.

The Udo—Ewatto War of 1870:

This also illustrated why divorce was rather uncommon in Ishan. ẸIYOKO, the wife of the brave ẸIDENOJIE of Udo, deserted her lawful husband and made for her home — IDUNSENU in Ewatto. Overconfident in himself, Eidenojie was reckless, though he was followed by 12 armed men. He walked right into the compound where his enstranged wife was — an affront to the people of Ewatto! For the sake of one woman the feared Eidenojie escaped with his head shaken though still standing on his shoulders, but his stalwarts' heads rolled on the Ewatto ground, and Eiyoko passed into legend!

5. The Evils of Child Marriage:

Morally, the custom was unjust and humanly wicked. The girl in many cases was sent to her husband before she had any sense. In some cases she grew up like the children in the compound, calling her husband ABA (Father)! The psychological shock could well be imagined the day she learnt that she was different from the other children: this "FATHER" of hers was her HUSBAND!

Marriage is hard enough with expressed and sincere love — but in infant marriage there was no question of love. She had to take what she was given as a husband, and that might be a dumb, a mutilated man, a tyrant, a Methusellah, etc.! The man might live with her for sometimes and finding her impossible or as a result of his advanced age, give her

in marriage to his son. Complicated relationship? Child marriage and the system of wife inheritance were the causes of unnatural relationships and confused nomenclatures in Ishan. As explained above, a man might have married a girl for himself and after she had had a child or more, he handed her over to his son for whom she might bear more children. Now here was a woman who had children that were her husband's brothers or sisters; some were her husband's sons and these were nephews to their maternal brothers! It all makes one's head reel!

Sometimes the girl lived and grew up at her parents' home particularly if they were wealthy and influential. When mature, she was kept as a lover by a third party, quite apart from the intending husband. The issues of this association gave justification for the existence of modern Native Courts today! Depending upon the mood of the Court and the interpretation of the District Officers, these children could pass as anybody's children. Sometimes they were adjudged as the children of the man who paid the dowry; at other times they were the issues of the natural father. This, unfortunately will continue to be the case until the men in charge of our affairs see the stupidity of working on an incongruous mixture of Native Custom and British Laws.

The latest attempt to right things was that such children were handed over to the man who pregnated the girl but he had to pay £5 for each son or £10 for each daughter — and as every educated Ishan knows, SLAVERY WAS ABOLISHED IN 1900!

Sometimes it was the husband that was a child, again commoner in the wealthy families. The supposed wife was allowed to go with any man she pleased and the offsprings of this association were the minor's children, and by the time he came of age, there was a long and entrenched line of bastardy.

There is no mincing of words about the system of pawning: it was downright slavery. Unfortunately in this year A.D. 1954, it is still practised in Ishan: a man is tied up with an expensive court case, he is building a house and is hard-up; his wife is ill and the only thing that could save her life is an expensive operation or he wants to take a costly title etc. What does he do? He takes one of his five-year-olds to a man and says: "Here is my daughter, please lend me £10." The man hands him the money and the innocent girl changed hands in the opposite direction of the £10! At first she is a servant but when she comes of age, she is elevated into the position of a wife. What really obtains now is that the father has no intention of marrying out his daughter at all; he goes from house to house with the poor girl in tow, until he finds a man willing to lend him the money he wants. There he leaves his child; if he cannot redeem her before she matures she goes to take an action FOR DIVORCE against HER HUSBAND, who really has been nothing but a SLAVE OWNER. If the 'divorce' is granted the father who can now collect some £40 to £50 over her grown up daughter, in Bride Price, returns the creditors miserable £10 and pockets £30 to £40 — quite a smart deal!

With or without the British administration the evil of child marriage over the years had time to grow deep roots watering itself on illusions of cheaper marriages and false hopes of getting more faithful wives.

Prohibit child marriage in all its forms in Ishan and the confused and bribe ridden atmosphere of the Native Courts would clear like magic! Many of the disputed paternity cases particularly from girls yet living with their parents, would disappear. It would cut divorce cases hanging in our courts like a curse, down to a sane minimum. No one could very well blame a child forced to marry a man, deserting when she came to her

senses, and when she did the avenging husband clinging to his pound of flesh, wanted the court to record on his behalf that she was two weeks pregnant! And by Jove, if she had a baby within a year of that divorce case, there was bound to be another case of disputed paternity! For the Court and Court Members it was of course, another source of revenue, generally speaking!

6. The Laws of Marriage as They Affected the Onojie:

As I have said under the Laws of inheritance an Onojie was an institution by himself — a Frankenstein Monster created by the community it existed to grow and feed upon. He could neither marry by the Ebee system nor take a wife by the dowry method; he could even marry two sisters. But his chief methods of taking wives were:—

(a) By Inheritance: After due burial ceremonies of his father, he was installed and he inherited everything in the harem minus only his mother! That gave him a flying start in a long reign of smash and grab.

(b) By Seizure (Ba Igben): This was the privilege that marked him out as the greatest octopus, whose tentacles could reach any woman, married, single, willing or unwilling. Once a while he took a regal walk or a look round his domain. Or favour seekers came to report to him of the presence of a damsel somewhere in his district. All he did was to send one of his CORAL BEAD Necklaces. On reaching there the unsuspecting girl or woman was called and before she knew what was on, the bead was in her neck — she was then the Onojie's wife, a marriage as binding as if it was performed by the Chief Justice of Nigeria or Archbishop of West Africa! If the former husband in whose house this drama might have taken place looked at the woman or talked to her once the necklace had been placed round her neck, and she dared not remove it under the pain of death, he had committed adultery with the "King's wife" by look or spoken word; and as far as the Onojie was concerned — adultery was adultery, with no half-way measures, and the method, immaterial. The punishment was death. A wise man, therefore, deprived of his wife, and she might be the only one in his life, bore his agonizing sorrow in his heart.

In many cases the result was tragic. An informant came to eulogise a woman he had seen in a village. The insatiable Onojie at once despatched a messenger with beads. The woman came captive but to the Onojie, it was "hatred at first sight!" Well, she had been pronounced Onojie's wife, and so she merely went to swell the myriads of women starving for love, food and freedom in the harem.

The famous story of HẸNHẸNELE, which has now gone down in Ishan folklore, is illustrative. The idiom is "OTUỌKPA imuọ bhena muọ bhena, khu ukpoko ni Hẹnhẹnele gbanọle jọ Ọmaka!" (No one man can be here and there at the same time, is the parcel Henhenele sent to Omaka!)

Henhenele was the wife of a man at Ibhiolulu, in Irrua. Chief Omaka, one of the men who got on by saying ISẸ (Amen) to everything the Onojie said, about 1885 reported to Eromosele of the existence of a stately woman fit only for the King, but at that time, a man was blaspheming Nature by calling her his wife. Omaka himself was immediately despatched to go and BA LE IGBẸN. Within five hours he was back with Henhenele, stupified and terrified. Either because of this or because Omaka had over-exaggerated her looks, she looked a very ordinary woman to Eromosele, who merely hissed in annoyance and sent her to swell the ranks of the near-slaves in the harem. After months when this

wretched woman had been starving with no food or husband, she made a small corn-leaf parcel containing a piece of chalk and a piece of charcoal which she sent through a small girl, Unuizigbe, to the man who sold her into her miserable state, Omaka. Seeing the contents of the small parcel, and sincerely no one till this day can say exactly what she really meant, Omaka cried in self-remorse, "May be the poor woman was hungry!" but unfortunately for him, there were several people who knew how he got on in the palace and were climbing by the same ladder; his junior brother called Ọbo saw the parcel arrive, heard the name of the sender, Henhenele, the Onojie's wife. "O-HO!, Brother, you are getting high—parcels from the Onojie's wife!" He made a bee-line dive for the palace and told the Onojie that he had just discovered that his maternal brother was in the habit of having secret dealings with some of his wives, with Henhenele in particular. The great Eromosele was stirred, and as usual, to fury. Obo was rewarded with a twist of the corner of the mouth, by way of a smile, and for Henhenele — the women, there were hundreds in the harem, were quickly assembled in the great inner Palace Square. Eromosele went in, brought out a white kolanut and handed it over to Henhenele who by now was already on her knees, with her hair standing on end for fear. "Greetings to my father," he said, "tell him to make good the road to Heaven for me, and as you can see, assure him I am in full control of ALL this side of Heaven. KHA HI!" (Say your prayers!) In another minute Henhenele's head was on the sand!

(c) By Pawning: Many of the Onojie's wives were married in this way, but as the reader would have seen already, he was a class to himself and so he had his own special way of pawning. People pawned themselves or property in return of money. People pawned themselves or their daughters or both to the Onojie, FOR FREEDOM! A man in trouble with the Inotu, a man alleged to have wronged the Onojie, by look, intention but certainly not by the spoken word, was heading for the abyss which was Eguare. He sent his daughter to the Onojie, to "please save me!" There went another inhabitant of the harem!

7. A Child is Born:

A man having married, he and his wife then thought of settling down to life. They might remain in the man's Ijiogbe or move to a new site. If the latter, then they were making a home on fresh grounds, which meant the wife must plant an UKHINMI in the space between her house and the husband's. This plant in this case is called IHIANLOTỌ. It had two significant uses.

First, it was considered an act against the departed spirits and a fouling of the fresh grounds to have marital relationship in a new compound before the growth of the Ihianloto. Secondly every Ishan wife knew she was one of a series and therefore had to make her position secure by doing all that would give her full claim as the FIRST WIFE. She who planted the Ihianloto of the compound was the First Wife. The first reason obviously made her all the more anxious to fulfil her duty of laying claim to her first position!

Most wives lived in the back-house with the husband in front. The wife went into her husband's house either to greet him first thing in the morning, to spend some time in the night, to sweep and rub the house or to pass his meals. The only occasion custom forbade her entering this house was when she was having her monthly period. As far as possible, during this period, she was forbidden to touch any food the husband would eat and entering his apartment. The reason for this was that Ishan custom considered a woman unclean at this period.

It was a law difficult for an only wife to obey. In that case she cooked the food but got somebody to take it to Odugha — the husband's apartment. She never broke the law of not entering this apartment until she was again clean, usually after seven days.

It was a law every man had to obey under the pains of causing annoyance to his departed ancestors, to forget any quarrel he might have got with his wife on the day she 'WASHED,' i.e., the day following end of her menstruation. Having taken her bath and made up her hair, she came to Odugha, knelt down and greeted her husband after the evening meal. That was a very discreet way of letting the husband know that that day was the proper day to think of getting an heir!

It was a big crime viewed seriously not only by the dead but by the living, to deny a woman that day, irrespective of whether she and the husband had not been on speaking terms for days.

No matter how anxious a couple might be about raising a family it was a sin all over Ishan to have marital relationship during day-time, and for this purpose, DAY meant from cockcrow to sunset! It is true that many people had extra respect for this law as a result of some juju like OBIẸMẸN of Irrua, ORẸIMẸNU of Ekpoma, defensive medicines for war etc., but the real aim of the taboo was to discourage laziness (a newly married man for the next three months would not see the road to his farm, otherwise!), and to prevent slackers who stayed at home during the day from committing adultery.

Now having understood the rules of life, should the woman become pregnant, she was treated with greater care. No severe beating and she herself had to avoid unsightly and shocking things like dead babies, ugly and mutilated people, tigers etc. The reasons are obvious — to avoid shocks which might be followed by abortion, and also it was believed that the child in the womb took semblance to what the pregnant woman saw or ate. Thus if she ate the flesh of the sleeping Puff Adder, the child would be fat, sleepy and sluggish; if she ate the flesh of a monkey, the baby would turn out to be cunning and ugly etc. So the pregnant woman had to see only good things, thought no evil and in fact the idea was to build up a happy and contended mental outlook.

At about the third month of her pregnancy she went to a native doctor who made an anti-abortion string which she wore round her waist or rarely round her neck. Whatever happened, this string was never allowed to fall to the ground, for the day she did that, the foetus would drop before the woman was ready to go into normal labour. This string was called EDAI (A Prop).

Then came the child: as soon as she was in labour, the old women of the family were called. They took the woman to the back of the house, where squatting on the ground she gave birth to the child, if she did not die of exhaustion or effects of mis-management. No greeting was allowed the woman until delivery of the after-birth, then she was showered with AMỌNGHỌN (Congratulations). Unlike the Yorubas, the child was separated as soon as it was born: it was not left on the cold ground waiting for the Placenta. But the old Ishan women had something they insisted upon: the child must cry before they treated it as one! Sometimes they left it on a cold surface until it cried, simply because of the discomfort and cold. Then it was picked up with joy and drummed in with the old women beating some music out of old calabashes and wooden flat mortars.

A big piece of mud or earth was then put into the fire and when it was red-hot, it was taken out, allowed to cool before it was pulverised. The sticky substance covering the body of the new-born (Vernix Caseosa)

The traditional rejoicing over the birth of a child at UNUEKI, Uromi. In the centre is the young mother with the ETO-OMO hairdo. On her right is the celebrant's mother and on the left is a relative, both wearing the basic five-piece Eto-Omo minus the colouring matter. This show-off on market day was five days before IHOETOA and naming ceremony.

was removed thoroughly by rubbing the skin with this fine earth, before the baby was washed. It is a belief in Ishan that unless this was properly removed, the child would stink for the rest of its life. Every morning, using warm oil in a pad, the cord was massaged until it withered away on about the 7 — 9th day of birth. The idea of using red hot earth was commendable but it was all defeated by grinding it on the ground thus introducing new organisms which cause the frequent Cord Infection that is responsible for death of an alarming number of babies within the first two months of birth.

On the day of delivery the husband took a small she-goat (greed is making people demand big ones in modern times), and one yam to the parents-in-law to report the good tidings. This goat, referred to as ẸBHIKPESE, was paid only on the first issue by one's wife. If she re-married, the new husband had to pay Ebhikpese when she had her first baby in her new home. Ebhikpese had its important legal value. It came very useful as a strong evidence in disputed paternity. The man who paid the goat was obviously the father or guardian of the father. Since the goat was paid on the very day the child was born, the answer to, 'who paid the Ebhikpese' was a quick way of knowing who the real father was. To ensure that no father out of austerity, or frivolity failed to pay this goat, custom ruled that without sending the goat and yam to the father-in-law, no man could see his first born child!

On the seventh day, particularly if she was the only wife, and not with her own parents, the woman had to begin to fend for herself: she could then go to the pond for water or farm for wood.

The Ishans happily had no taboos about MULTIPLE PREGNANCY. They dreaded twins because right from pregnancy to nursing they were followed with more dangers and hard work, than obtained with single births. Apart from this a woman who had twins and was able to look after them was a respected woman in the community and she ranked with those who had done EMIỌ ỌKHAE (Acts of Valour). A triplet mother, of course, was an individual of almost veneration and if the babies lived, she got rewards not only from her husband, but from the Onojie, who had to send her three maids to help her during the nursing period.

The only type of baby not liked in Ishan was the ALBINO (AYAIN). No mother prayed for one, but if she gave birth to it, it was God-sent, but no particular attention was paid to it and if it died, mourning was a minimum.

(a) Hair-Washing (Ihọetoa):

After three months the ceremony of hair-washing was performed. In the olden days this was the ceremony at which the ETO ỌMỌ, plaited 14 days after delivery was loosened and washed. The men and women at the place where the child was born and where the mother was still living gathered on the appointed day. They were feasted with much dancing and rejoicing. An animal like a sheep, a pig or a whole carcass of an antelope, was used for the cooking. The mother's hair which had been done in EKASA, yellow native soap, was ceremoniously washed. The child was allowed its first adornment. The mother gorgeously dressed and with all the people gathered, was ready for

(b) The Naming Ceremony:

In Ishan it was unusual for a man to think up a name before the child was born except in cases where the native doctor had already warned the parents that the name of the person who was reincarnating the new baby must be given to it. Ishans being firm believers in reincarnation, often went to consult the oracle before the actual naming ceremony,

either to give the name of the person or for the child to take up the profession of the man when he was alive. However where this consultation was already made the name was only known to the family and the child still had to go through the naming ceremony.

At the ceremony the baby was taken to the most senior man in the gathering, who throwing it up said, "I name you UGHULU (Vulture!), which was neither killed nor harmed!" Nobody said anything so that he knew that though his reason for giving the name was good, the gathering did not like the name. Then he made another try: "I name you ITIKU (Rubbish Dunghill), which is noted for its ability to take insults which only added to its size. Still no comments. Then he threw the child up for the third time and gave it its proposed real name. Then he is greeted with blessings for the baby, ỌIRẸTỌ (He will live long with it!) All Ishan names have meaning and so this day was the appropriate day for relatives and friends or enemies to tell the parents what they thought of them. Anybody wishing to give a name carried the baby and did so. It was not Ishan custom to give monetary presents by those wishing to give names; this obviously is a borrowed custom probably from the Yorubas.

If the woman was still living where she delivered, outside her home, it was on this day she returned home. That night, custom decreed that she went to 'greet her husband with the new Baby' and she slept at Odugha!

(c) CIRCUMCISION:

The Ishans had no particular ceremony over Male Circumcision, which was performed any time the parents were bold enough to have it done. The more usual thing was for the operation to be delayed till the child could withstand the pain and sure sepsis; this was between 5 and 10 years of age.

CLITORIDECTOMY: This was the female circumcision and had a more regular ceremony. A girl was not circumcised until she was mature and then, within a week or so of her going to her husband's place. The idea was to delay the ceremony because it was not just a disgrace but there were fines to be paid to the Owena should the girl be found not virtuous on the day of circumcision. On the appointed day the female members of the family gathered in the compound, and before them the girl was examined; if she was found intact, she sang out her praise and everybody began to sing and dance with the men shooting guns. While the operation was going on relatives, particularly of the intended husband, began to give presents to the good girl. The husband came later with gifts of money, beads and clothes. Presents of money, yams and oil are also made to thank the watchful mother. As soon as the wound healed arrangements were made to send the girl to her husband.

The ceremonies surrounding Clitoridectomy are most pronounced even to this day with Uzea people, a further evidence of the fact that the so-called backwardness goes hand in hand with simplicity and virtue.

In Uzea a girl is mature round about the age of 16, and the next 3 to 6 months forms an exciting period in her simple life. When the family has decided that their daughter has come of age, they inform the intended husband that she is ready for the ceremony of circumcision. On the appointed day the Owena (the Surgeon, usually a female in this case) arrives and the girl is led into an AGAAH, an open enclosure attached to the house, where all the female members of the family are assembled. The Owena then examines the girl and if intact, she declares her virtuous, to the great joy of the family. While the operation of

CEREMONIAL CLITORIDECTOMY

Two Uzea girls who have come of age: The one on the right of the viewer has gone through the ceremony and being virtuous, has had the traditional hairdo (OJIETO). The one on the left is gettting ready for the ceremony. The bride price in Uzea was very low and the husband had no clothes to buy — but he had to buy 12 — 15 *AKPONO each costing about* £1, *in modern money.*

trimming off the Clitoris with the upper ends of the Labia minora, which is all that is really done at the operation, goes on, there is dancing with the shooting of guns.

When the wound has healed the girl is ready for the public announcement of her virtue and the great care her parents had taken over her during the past 16 years. The special circumcision hair-dresser is sent for and she, for a fee consisting of 7,200 Cowries, now equivalent to 3/-, and a bundle of yams from the intended husband, and 4,800 Cowries (equivalent to 2/-) plus a calabash of palm oil from the girl's mother, gives the girl the traditional hair-style for virtuous girls only. This is the OJIETO (The King of Hairs!). The next three months is a period of rejoicing and feasting for the girl and her family. The husband spends a lot of money buying beads (AKPONO) which the girl wears round her waist and Coral Beads round her neck. The girl with the Ojieto and her body decorated with ASUN, a juice that turns black when dry, is followed round the village wearing no clothes to show that she has nothing to be ashamed of. She calls on relatives and friends who congratulate her with presents. Until the end of the three months she goes to the market or to village functions stack naked; only sinners have something to hide!

Though she wears no clothes the Akpono round her waist cost the anxious husband-to-be anything up to £15 in present day money. The 3 to 6 months wait after the circumcision is very welcome to the husband, who for the past three months had known nothing but expenses. This period of show-off gives him time to recover, and search for some money to settle the bride price. In the olden days this was negligible compared with what was actually spent on the girl's hair and beads, since by the time his girl was mature, in services to the parents-in-law, he should have paid the equivalent of the bride price in full for EBẸẸ. Since the advent of the white man, the husband crushed by the circumcision expenses, still has to pay anything up to £10 to the father he has been serving since the day the girl was born!

However when the husband has fulfilled all he owes to his girl's family, the girl is sent to him. The husband at a ceremony, unties the first strand of the decorative hair before the whole thing is loosened. After the first night at the husband's she becomes a woman and must from then on wear cloth.

(d) THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY:

When the bride price had been paid and the circumcision wound had healed a date was fixed for the girl to go to her husband. The excited man began to make feverish arrangements, buying new clothes, getting the house ready and buying kolanuts, coconuts and wine. In the evening of the appointed day selected male and female members of the family accompanied the girl to the husband's village. They must go through a friend or relative of the family in that village and this person was the future guardian. This go-between accompanied the party and by about 8 p.m. (the husband feeling the time was 11 p.m.!), they got to the street of the husband. A message was sent to the husband that they were coming along with his wife but unfortunately a tree or a stump had held up their progress; would he care to come and clear the obstacle? The husband at once sent 'axes and matchets' in the form of money and coconuts to remove whatever was holding them up. They proceeded along the street and again went another message that it sounded foolish that on a day such as that day he should have allowed trees to block his street. Messengers were hurried to them with more presents. This went on until by the time they got to the entrance of the house where the biggest

obstacle had to be cleared, their bag was full! The party then entered the house and the leader presented the girl in disparaging terms: "You asked for the hand of our daughter in marriage; here she is but we would want you to know right now that she has no training, has no sense, plays like a child, cannot cook and knowing all these it will be your duty to train and mould her to your satisfaction." After the customary presents to the Egbele and compound women, the girl was counted on the lap of the husband where she took her seat on the 11th count. Then followed dancing, singing and plenty of gun shooting with the cry of joy, UKU KHU GHU!

This went on for a long time with the husband wishing someone would come and inform his in-laws that their houses had gone on fire so that they would all race home! Since marital relations were forbidden once the cock crew and Ishan cocks crow by 4 a.m., prudence and kindness demanded everybody wished the couple well and departed by 3 a.m., latest! Sometimes a kind and wise relative discreetly suggested the bride had had a tiring day and was feeling sleepy, a suggestion usually made with much yawning! At this, most people except the more stupid ones or obviously mischievous ones, left.

The next morning the bride, obviously shaken, bewildered and tired, was taken out by the female relatives of the husband to have a wash. For the first 7 days she stayed indoors and did not go to fetch water or wood. She went by the name of OBHIỌHA (Bride) for the next three months after which she was given her cooking utensils and had to fend for herself. During the Obhioha period she forbade nothing and behaved like one of the daughters of the family, e.g., she could take her bath in the compound while all married women must have their baths at the back-house, in fact even the pots they used for water must not be brought to the house.

(e) THE ABDOMINAL TATTOO (ISEKELE):

In the olden days when a girl came of age, that was just before circumcision, she had to undergo the abdominal tattoo. While this consisted of only three linear marks in men, women had ten: from arms by the side, there was a pair from the front part of each shoulder down to the waist line and one such mark running downwards across each breast. That gave six in front. From behind there was a pair running to the waist line from each shoulder. From below the navel serrated marks called ABIHIAGHA were made. These were only to add beauty to the full ten marks.

Into the skin wounds were rubbed black pigments. The ceremony was not so much a test of 'manhood' as it was in men, but it showed that the girl was now fit to be a woman, a mother and of marriageable age. Any man who had carnal knowledge of a woman who had not yet had this abdominal tattoo had committed a crime equivalent to modern Rape.

8. The Laws of Paternity:

In the olden days there was no question of disputed paternity as it exists in our Native Courts today when there are myriads of bastards in modern sense. Every woman of child bearing age was covered by certain laws of ownership—hence the Ishan idiom, "ẸI MIO BHI IDOLO (IDO LU = Done secretly)" which means that no man can claim the issue of a secret dealing. Therefore the laws guarding paternity were as follows:—

(i) CHILDREN FROM LOVERS:

(a) If the woman was an Arebhoa then the issues were for the woman's father, that meant their natural grandfather was their father!

(b) If the woman had an intended husband then the issues belonged to the intended husband who might not be the natural father.

(ii) CHILDREN FROM A WOMAN SEPARATED FROM HER HUSBAND:

(a) If the bride price was not yet paid back to the husband the issues belonged to the first husband irrespective of who pregnated the woman.

(b) If the dowry had been fully refunded by the woman's father or as sometimes happened by the woman herself, the issues were for the woman's father if he paid the money back; but if the woman refunded the dowry herself, the issues were for the man who put her in the family way if this man later married her; if he did not the practice was for the suitor who came along later to make arrangements to cover both the mother and her child who then became his child; in other words the woman's father had an extra large bride price!

(iii) CHILDREN FROM ADULTEROUS UNION:

All the issues were for the lawful husband.

(iv) CHILDREN FROM IBHALEN ASSOCIATION:

If two kindreds met and pregnancy followed, the child belonged to the intended husband. If she had none the child was for the girl's father or for extra large dowry, to the man who came to marry her.

(v) CHILDREN FROM A WOMAN WHOSE HUSBAND WAS A MINOR:

All the children were the lawful children of the minor and they took precedence over the natural children the man would get when he had overcome his minority.

(vi) A CHILD BORN BY A WIDOW:

If the woman was generally known to be pregnant before the husband died, the child when born later was the child of the dead man and such children were usually named UMỌERA (YOU HAVE NO FATHER). This must not be mixed up with the name ỌMỌERA (He has a father), which in Ishan is the name given to a child whose father was seriously ill when its mother was pregnant, but he lived to see his child.

In certain parts of Ishan the law is ẸI MIO BHẸ ẸLINMI (Dead men cannot have children), hence in such places before the woman delivered she had to be inherited so that the child belonged to the inheritor. Sometimes if the pregnancy was very early when the husband died, and by the third month it was still not known generally, the man who inherited her successfully claimed the child. It was immaterial if she gave birth to a child six months after the last husband's death. This should cause no surprise because in certain parts of Ishan 'B' a man could adopt his father's youngest son from another mother, as his own first son particularly if it is vital for him to perform certain ceremonies like OGBE, before he had his own son.

(vii) CHILDREN BY A WIFE OF AN IMPOTENT:

If a man who for one reason or another had been unable to get his wife to be pregnant, had formally given her permission to try her luck outside (AMUO LO OBỌ BHU GHE), the issues were the lawful children of the lawful husband.

As I have already said under the law of inheritance Omo Osho, issue from a love affair, had no legal status customarily. He could not

inherit property and did not appear at ancestral worship, but if a man had kept a girl and she bore him a son while still in her father's house and he later paid the dowry on her (not a refund) he could take this boy as his first son. If he did not but married another woman who bore him a son, this particular son would be his heir.

9. The Laws Of Seniority:

Since Ishans were polygamous and wealth was counted in wives and children, seniority amongst one's own children was very well guarded as it also affected the order and method of inheritance.

(a) FIRST SON: This is the very first male issue by a lawful wife. An Omo Osho could only aspire to this unique position in the family when all the conditions already enumerated were fulfilled. A man made a public testament of his first son by giving him the hearts of all animals slaughtered in his compound, so that by the time he died all Egbele were aware of who was his heir.

(b) SECOND SON: For the purpose of inheritance and the sharing of property, NO ONE WOMAN COULD HAVE FIRST AND SECOND SONS, unless she was the ONLY WIFE. If there were several wives and one woman was the mother of the first and second sons according to age, when the father wanted to share things, he gave the first son his share first, side-tracked the second son, and gave to the third son who had a different mother, the next share. If the third and fourth sons had the same mother, he would miss the fourth son and let the fifth choose next if he too was from another woman. The custom therefore was that property was shared ACCORDING TO DOORS, that is, that the property owner shared whatever he had to give to his children, in his lifetime, in such a way that NO MOTHER IN HIS COMPOUND missed a share because her son was very junior. For example, a man had two wives. The first wife had the 1st., 2nd., 3rd., and 4th. sons; the second wife then had the 5th son. If the father had just two things to share, the first son chose first and the FIFTH SON then chose the other. Thus it often happened that while the first son had a wife, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th had none, while the most junior, the 5th had.

(c) DAUGHTERS: As already explained, apart from the first daughter, ẸHALE NỌ ỌDIỌN, who really held a position of love more than anything else, daughters had no position of seniority. Things were much worse for them after they had got married and left the family.

(d) AMONGST WOMEN: How seniority was decided amongst the married women of the village has already been described: it was by the system of IRẸKE.

(e) OMIJIOGBE: While in most places Omijiogbe was hereditary, passing from father to the son who performed the burial and Ogbe ceremonies in a few places like Ekpoma, ownership of the family was by age, the oldest man of the Uelen succeeding the last Omijiogbe. In the Royal Houses, of course, the Omijiogbe is the heir and automatically takes precedence over all his brothers and uncles.

(f) SYSTEM OF SHARING: Having known the custom over seniority, it is easy to talk of how things are shared between two people according to Ishan laws. It all actually depends upon what was there to share. In all cases it would be oppression or cheating for the man who did the sharing to choose first.

(*i*) *Food:* It is the junior who does the sharing. The elder, by age, then chooses first.

(*ii*) *Labour:* Now the older one divides the piece of job for the younger one to choose the bit he thinks is lighter.

10. A Man Loses A Wife:

(i) BY DIVORCE: It has already been made clear that legal annulment of a marriage was practically unknown before the advent of the white man. Heads fell on both sides when a woman bolted from her lawful husband. There was of course, no question of a refund of dowry. Invariably the husband retained the children who had past the breast feeding age.

(ii) BY REFUSAL: There comes in most married couples' lives when either thinks that life was much happier before they met. Such a time came to our forebears, and if that awful realization came to the woman first, she bolted for freedom with the inevitable slashing of a few throats or overt war! But if the man found that the woman's cup of sins was full and overflowing, he had a quick remedy; all he did was to get into his room count TWENTY COWRIES which he handed over to his wife and showing her the door! There was the end of an unhappy marriage, the annulment being as binding as if it was a decree by the Supreme Court of Nigeria, with the difference that there was no NISI nonsense about it! Before the eyes of the departed spirits it was DECREE ABSOLUTE!

Sometimes if the woman was still in love with the man or did not want to leave her children, as she must do if she left the husband, she tried some delaying manoeuvres: she went round showing the 20 cowries to the elders of the Egbele, who of course came down to the husband with "What is this I hear about you and your servant?" Sometimes the elders succeeded in talking round the angry husband, but since the annulment had been absolute, to take back this woman he had to remarry her, by slaughtering a goat at the ancestral shrine to tell the spirits that he had recalled all he had said! But if he was a man who had genuinely had enough of a tigress, he merely answered the elders' question with "What I have given, I have given!"

In some cases some proud women thought it would be a disgrace going to beg the husband indirectly by showing the cowries round, and so as soon as the angry husband handed over the cowries to one such woman she made for home as the crow flies! Here comes the rub; if within a day or two flayed temper settled and the man had found that his only wife was gone and so he was face to face with all the hardships attached to ỌHALE (Bachelorship), he went meekly to his wife in the parents' village and made her believe that before her was a penitent and not the devil of yesterday and as a result the woman followed him back home, in the eyes of his Egbele and the departed ancestors, he had committed a crime worse than adultery. It was as heinous as having anything to do with a widow before formal inheritance! It would cost him a big fat she-goat slaughtered at the ancestral shrine and shared by his Egbele, before he could call the woman his wife again. Also he had some account to settle with his parents-in-law.

(iii) BY CONSENT: Sometimes a man feeling he was too old for one of his wives, could slaughter a goat to remove that woman from his list of wives; he could then give her to his son. This was one of the ways by which a brother (same mother) could have a brother as an uncle or a sister as a niece! (Brother, am I confused!)

It sometimes happened that an indulgent father not wanting to expose his erring son who committed adultery with one of his wives, removed such a woman by the same procedure from being his wife and he handed her over to his greedy son.

Although this re-marriage by consent was permissible, it was against Ishan custom for a man to take the wife of his son, dead or living. No

amount of goat flesh or blood could make the living elders or spirits of departed ancestors be a party to this collusion! It was just not done! Similarly it was not customary for a man to inherit the wives of his junior brother, unless there were no other brothers.

(iv) By Death: This was the more painful way of losing a wife, for it included mental and physical sufferings for the husband. As soon as the wife died, arrangements were made for the return of the dead body to the village of her birth. If she was old and with grown up children, the body was accompanied in a festive mood by as many people as possible, depending mostly on the popularity of the dead woman and/or children. The corpse wrapped in a white cloth and resting on a form made from seven palm branch stalks, was carried feet first by two men of Igene rank, one at the head and the other at the feet. Depending upon the mood of the man at the head, the corpse bearers walked or ran as if they were strongly under the influence of alcohol. Superstition made many believe that the movements of these carriers were controlled by the dead body; thus before leaving the husband's village, the corpse 'paid' courtesy visits to the homes of her friends and 'went' to say goodbye to places she had cherished while alive. With singing and drumming the dead woman was returned to her own village.

If the wife had no children and was young the body was solemnly returned to her people for burial.

Mourning: As soon as the body had been returned the husband went into a compulsory mourning. He discarded all his clothes, tied a small black or smoked cloth round his loins, smeared his forehead, hands and feet with charcoal and strings of a delicate forest creeper called IRIALOLO were tied round the ankles, wrists and neck, and for the next 7 days he carried a bow and arrows (7), from which he shot away one every day. In a broken pot green Ukhinmi leaves were burnt, the smelling fumes being supposed to be capable of driving off the spirit of the dead wife which might be angling to come to the living husband. For these seven days the widower slept on the bare ground, never cleaned himself and remained round his house — generally cutting a pitiable figure for himself. On the last day he shot away the last arrow, threw away the bow and the pot of leaves, discarded Black and all the paraphernalia of mourning of which Irialolo is symbolic. He then came home, took a bath and there ended his public mourning for his wife.

If he had died, the wife was bound to go through a similar period of mourning. She put a small white cloth on the bier with her back turned to the dead body and after the body had been taken away for burial she discarded her clothes and decked herself in black with Irialolo round her wrists, ankles and neck. She armed herself with IHIMIN, a many sided fruit from a tree much like the oil bean tree, and believed to be much shunned by spirits! In some places she carried the female blade for cutting yams (ELỌ) while in others she also carried the bow and seven arrows, all these being meant to frighten away the spirit of the dead partner. She wept loudly every day and on the 7th day she went to the husband's farm, wept round it, scratched up 7 yams with a stick, tied them up in a bundle (the only time custom permits a woman to carry a bundle of yams), and returned home. She then discarded her mourning, washed and then ended her public mourning. To her, really, the death of her husband was not only a grievous loss but brought her great and painful humiliation. Under Women's Association it will have been seen that a woman sank in her status like lead in water, on losing her husband in the village. If she was the most senior woman of the village, she then

became the most junior, and even to achieve that position, she had to be inherited; if not and she merely stayed with her children, she had no position at all !

Children of a dead father or mother merely had their hair shaved off and were kept away from farms, markets or going about alone during the 7 days period of mourning.

11. Burial of the Dead :

Since the smallest Ishan Community was a unit organized on kinship it was very rare for a person to die without a next of kin. As long as he was an accepted member of the village with or without a relative, in health, he was like one of the fingers of a hand, acting in unison with the rest for the common welfare of the village and in death, was a collective liability. Even in modern times no doctor just coming into the district would fail to be impressed and sometimes alarmed, by a whole village turning out to accompany one sick man to the hospital, particularly if it was a case of an accident. Thus when a man died, the whole village mourned him for the customary 7 days: they abstained from their usual work, dances and merriment.

(*i*) A CHILD: A few people usually from the Uelen went to bury it. Mourning was limited to the immediate relatives.

(*ii*) A YOUNG MAN : He was buried by the Egbonughele and the Igene with no formalities; he was buried as born — naked.

(*iii*) OLD MAN WITHOUT CHILDREN : He was treated like a mere young man — but in places where the Clothing Ceremony was customary, and he had performed it, he was given the privilege of a wash and buried with all respects, and clothed.

(*iv*) ELDERLY MAN WITH CHILDREN : He was buried with much feasting and the least sign of mourning. The pre-interment ceremonies are described below. The body was taken to the special burial ground for such respected old people.

(*v*) MARRIED WOMEN : The corpse was returned to her family. The uniformity of this practice is rather surprising. When a man had been accepted as a member of a village where he was not born, if he died there he was buried there. But in Ishan custom marriage does not alter a woman's nationality. If an Uromi woman married an Ekpoma man, lived all her life and died at Ekpoma, she was still an Uromi woman and must be returned to her people; even before her death her illness must have been reported to her relatives at Uromi to avoid any suspicion of a foul play. In most villages there were different burial grounds or sections in the same bush. Children and childless people were buried in the same bush, and old men with children were buried in different places. Each person had his or her own grave which was about 3 to 4 feet deep.

Only an Onojie could be buried in the house or in a special cemetery close to the palace grounds. All others had to be buried in the bush. Hereditary chiefs and some important men could be buried in their homes but the children had to bribe the Onojie to obtain permission to bury their fathers outside the usual place. Indiscriminate burial of dead bodies in houses and compounds is an occurrence of recent times. The old custom built up by men who had no knowledge of public health as we know it today, are now made light of and in several districts the traditional burial grounds have been desecrated and turned into farm lands. The fear of spirits, like the respect of the dead, has vanished with the arrival of 'civilization.'

(*vi*) PRE-INTERMENT RITES : As would have been seen already, the Ishans of old had a deep respect bordering on superstition and dread for dead bodies, not just because they fear the dead body was that of

a person who had then joined the world of spirits but because a dead body was a source of danger to the living. Since with the climate we have bodies decompose at an alarming rate (it is almost complete in four days !) relatives whose duty it was to prevent any disgraceful associations with the bodies of their dead relatives, did all in their power to bury the bodies as quickly as possible before the slightest onset of putrefaction. Waking therefore was an uncommon thing. There was one general reason when interment had to be postponed, and even in this case it was only for old and respected elders with children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, usually described as EYẸ BI IHIẸN-HIẸN. The reason was death on a "bad or unlucky day." Most generally the rest day, Ẹdẹ Izẹlẹ or Ẹdẹ Ọwọ, and in some districts, also the second day of farming week, were considered unlucky days to join one's ancestors ! If an aged man died on such a day, he had to be buried the next day—but during the night when the dead was amongst the living, only the bravest of the living ventured out. The playful and harmless dotard whose whiskers Eyẹ and Ihiẹn-hiẹn pulled fondly a couple of days back, had now become an object of fright !

Before the body was ready for burial, it was washed, a new pot being used for the water. If the dead man was a well-to-do man the Egbele demanded the slaughtering of a goat called ẸBHI-HIỌN, in honour of the sponge with which the body had been washed. The body was then wrapped in a new mat and brought to the front of the main building, for the ceremony with EMA ẸLIMIN, the special foufou prepared very simply with fish, or with the goat flesh in the case of a wealthy man. The children assembled round the body that was lying with the head towards the house. On behalf of the first son one of the IKỌ ẸGBẸLE (Egbele's representatives) blessed the dead and cut some of the foufou at the feet. The children and all the descendants knelt besides the body and were given a bit of the food one by one. With this last sacrament over, the feet which had been exposed for this ceremony were wrapped properly. The body was then placed on a form made with seven fresh mid-ribs of palm branches (IKPOGBA IHINLỌN). The whole is then wrapped with a white piece of cloth, provided by the heir. While this was going on some Igene and Egbonughele had been busy preparing the grave at the appropriate site. The body was then taken on the head by two men, with the feet in front. For an old man with children there was dancing round the village, the place visited depending upon the whims of the carriers although they made the onlookers believe the dead body was directing them ! Then they headed for the cemetery with the heir holding the pot that had been used during the washing. When the body had been interred the pot was placed on the tomb and everybody turned for home with the strict injunction that no one must turn or knock each other's heels. The idea was to get out of the burial grounds as quickly as possible. The hoes and cutlasses used were left at a gutter in the compound for seven days before they were touched or used again. The Igene and Egbonughele washed their hands and feet in front of the house before they entered their houses.

Where the dead man had no issue but had a godson, this god-child assumed the position of a first son in all the ceremonies. EMA ẸLIN-MIN (the last meal) was firmly believed in since Ishans believed that the journey to the world of spirits was long and tedious. Thus any condemned person was given this simple meal first before execution, to provide energy for the last journey.

12. The Burial Ceremonies (*Itolinmin*) :

The time between death and onset of the burial obsequies depended on wealth and affluence of the dead man and his children. Rich families usually began at once or shortly after the man's death. In the case of the Onojie, it will have been seen already that the ceremonies were so vital that they were soon after the death of the last Onojie.

The funeral ceremonies were performed for one's Egbele and the success of the ceremonies depended upon the satisfaction of the elders and various bodies like the married daughters of the village (EKWIAN), EDOWAYA (helpers) etc. The first son of the dead person was the pivot of the whole occasion. All brothers and sisters did their share under him.

(*a*) UTARE : This was the occasion on which the heir made public announcement of the father's or mother's death. It should be a ceremony lasting one whole day, although to show wealth some families prolonged it. The requirements consisted of a ring of fish and a goat; The goat was slaughtered and like the fish, it was divided into two halves with the celebrant retaining half while the Egbele took the other half. At the end of the ceremony of Utare the day for the actual Burial Ceremonies was fixed, near or put off, depending upon how ready the family was.

The Utare ceremony itself had significant purpose; It was on this day that the wives to be inherited were disposed of. Those who were not going to be inherited began their formal mourning. In the eyes of the Edion if one of them died and the heir had not performed the Utare ceremony, that man was still alife, and appropriately when they shared anything at the Okoughele, they faithfully sent the dead man's own to his house ! Thus custom laid down that this ceremony should not be delayed for more than three months. If it was not done after three months, as far as the Edion were concerned, their colleague had left the village for a very, very long journey, and he got no more share from their booties !

(*b*) UHELAMIN : This is the first stage of the Burial Ceremonies. On the eve of the appointed day, which is customarily ẸDẸ IZẸLẸ or rest day, and early the next morning the whole village reverberated with the booming of guns and feasting. In most parts of Ishan 'A' the actual first day of the ceremonies fell on first day of the farming week, that is on Ekpoma, Igueben, Okhuesan, Ekpon or Ugboha market day.

First a she-goat was slaughtered in honour of the parent's waist, that is, for having been able to have children. Dances and friends came to heighten the effects of the day, while the children all spent freely, voluntarily or on demand. On the second day, there was a lull in the activities; on this day came the EDOWAYA who were the celebrant's helpers. They accepted presents and thanked the givers on behalf of the man they were assisting. On this day too a cow was slaughtered. As soon as the cow was shot the first person to touch it with a matchet owned the tail, by custom, an obvious incentive our forefathers invented to ensure that the cow shot or wounded was recovered, because without the cow all the ceremonies would be delayed. On the third day foufou in large quantities was prepared. It was shared as follows : 30 foufou balls for the Edion, 20 for Igene and their underlings, the Egbonughele; the rest was shared amongst the visitors. Using the cow meat of the previous day the soup pots were loaded in such a way that they would be acceptable; the Edion and even the Igene had the knack of refusing their share on the ground that it was not sufficient. In such a case he (the celebrant) had to use money to bribe the people to accept; therefore he might as well make sure that the foufou and soup were of such quantity that only a gathering of elephants would grumble at the size — hence the cow even

"ABAMEN NA ABAMEN——O!" "EGBOSE—E!"

At a Burial Ceremony in Ekpoma. Holding up a matchet is the chief celebrant and close by him, holding a vessel from which money is thrown out, is the Senior IDOWAYA.

till this day, is a MUST for the burial ceremonies. The fourth day was the day of IKHUEMIRE. All the men who married the daughters of the man being buried, came down with something like a war dance, with shooting of guns and praising their parent-in-law. Each son-in-law brought the customary gifts consisting of a goat, a foul, a piece of white cloth for the celebrant, 30 coconuts and Elamẹn Ihinlọn for Edion Egbele, 20 coconuts and Elamẹn isẹn for the Igene and Ọkhihinlọn (now nearly 5d.) for the intermediary. A man's greatness in life could be ascertained by the grandness of his burial ceremonies which was also influenced by the number of sons-in-law that came with this type of dance. The wealthy Afua of Ekpoma went down in history when 100 sons attended his ceremonies.

The ceremonies of the 4th. day dominated by the Ukhuemire were of great significance: the Ukhuemire was an indisputable evidence of lawful marriage. It was only the legally recognized husband that was permitted to attend the father or mother-in-law's funeral ceremonies in this way.

The fourth day ended with the ceremonial hair-plaiting called ETO ỌKUKU, a feature of all really big funeral ceremonies. On the 5th day, the Edowaya then showed the celebrant the accounts of those who had sent him presents and what had been collected during the ceremonies. He carefully noted these as he would be required by custom to return these presents in greater measure when any of these friends were involved in a similar ceremony. After this the helpers were feasted, thanked and they left.

As soon as possible after this the chief celebrant killed a goat or used a whole carcass of an antelope to end the burial ceremonies, expressed as FA NỌLẸN URIA. This is the final act in a ceremony that left the heir exhausted and broke — but he had done all that was necessary to have full right to inheritance of the person he had just honoured with a most crushing funeral.

13. Ogbe Ceremony :

In most places all that was necessary to have full right to inheritance and the title, if any, of the dead parent was to perform the burial ceremonies strictly according to native laws and custom, that is, to the satisfaction of his Egbele. But in Uromi and Ekpoma, in particular, another ceremony had to follow—and this was the OGBẸ. Like the burial ceremonies it involved the slaughtering of a cow and the spending of a lot of money, the whole proceedings being ended with the dressing of the Cow's Head which was tied with some rafia cane and hung up; this part was the most vital for without its being done all the expenses were for nothing.

It was not everybody that was entitled to perform Ogbe. It was usually the first son in a big family or an Omijiogbe that was required to perform it before he could have legal authority of inheritance of his father's and family property. If a man performed it, it holds good for himself and his children, that is, he had confirmed his own line's right to inheritance: if he died his son must succeed him fully. But should this son now die without performing the Ogbe ceremony the grandson could not inherit the family property, like economic trees, titles etc. Claim to these things then passed to the senior uncle of the loser. This must be very clear; a man had three sons: Uduẹhi, Itama and Ọbaedo. On his death, Uduehi, the heir, successfully claimed everything after burial ceremonies of his father but without performing Ogbe. Later he died and his son claimed the family property and family title; he could not get them by

native laws and custom. The right person to come forward would be Itama, the boy's uncle, who if he was wise and proceeded to perform Ogbe would now bring his own line into the right succession line.

In most places in Ishan even amongst the Ruling Houses Ogbe has long been considered redundant and claim to inheritance is decided by the burial ceremonies: instead of ỌNỌ LUOGBẸ NA BHO OGBẸ (he who performs Ogbe owns the family tree), the more constant Ishan custom after Ogbe was discontinued came to be ỌNỌ TO OLINMIN YAN UWA (He who performed the burial ceremonies owns the house and all therein. In the case of the Onojie, however, the expensive Ogbe is now incorporated in the Funeral Ceremonies, except in Uromi where it still has to be done separately.

14. The Clothing Ceremony (Iruen):

I have found no uniformity for this ceremony but all over Ishan where it was done, the significance was the same. In places where the ceremony had the greatest significance it was performed by the wealthiest and top ranking people of the community. This was the case in Igueben, Ugbegun, Ẹkpoma, etc. In Ugboha it was quite a simple ceremony: a man never went in for the ceremony until he had had a child; then he went to the Odion of his family who tied the cloth, a simple hand woven piece of cloth, round his waist with his blessings. Age did not matter. In Ibhole and Ukhun the ceremony was performed in age grades, for example, all Egbonughele could perform it together and then left this rank of scavengers.

In Ewohimi and Ebelle areas it was simpler still and made so cheap that it would be within the reach of every man. It could only be performed by those with children however, but if they had none of their own they could adopt their brothers' sons for that purpose. Irrua form of Iruen was simple to the point of being ridiculous; all one required was a native Tomato (OKHOKHO) and one Fluted Pumpkin (UMẸKHẸN). At the ancestral shrine his guardian tied a cloth round him, and his wife, who he might have been living with for years, was shown to him! On the contrary, in a place like Ukpenu Ekpoma it was a terrifying ceremony; cows, goats, sheep etc., must be used. A man might be very rich and might be the oldest man in the village; until he had performed the Iruen ceremony he was of the Streetsweeper rank!

The Ekpoma or Igueben ceremony was the more customary of the expensive type. All other types were in essence modifications dictated by common hardship and necessity. A ceremony with such great significance should be performed by as many, and as early as possible and hence ought not to be made so difficult that only the upper segment of the community could perform it. For instance, in Ekpoma, it was only the man who had advanced in age with several children and of sufficient financial standing that could dare embark on the crushing expenses.

First, the man called his Egbele together to consult the oracle as regards who amongst the elders who themselves had performed the Iruen, should tie his cloth. The oracle was consulted four times before a date was fixed. He then got ready two pieces of cloth which must be white, OKHỌN, a cloth-like material from ỌGỌLỌ palm and OVUORELE which was the belt. On the appointed day he killed a he-goat with which he prepared foufou. The Egbele was then called together, the white cloth, Okhon and Ovuorele in a white-washed calabash container brought out and the celebrant with his wife was then surrounded by the Igene and Egbonughele who spread out their own covering cloths.

The man then removed all his clothes and the appointed elder tied the white cloth round his waist and over this, the Okhon. The cloth underneath was tied with the Ovuorele. Three times the elder called his name but he should not answer until the fourth time when he did so with HE YỌ-Ọ, AGBỌN TIE EMẸN ỌIYẸ ẸLINMIN! (TRULY it is the world calling me and not spirits!). He was then covered with chalk and asked to take the wife with whom he had been clothed. The man then went home and danced round the village kneeling at each door to thank the people. He was greeted with UKHIN RUẸN NẸ ẸLINMIN GBE! (May you not be clothed to die at the hands of the Spirits!). He was given money or the house owner might shoot a gun in his honour. On getting back home there was feasting with dancing and the booming of guns. For the next seven days he was strictly forbidden from sleeping on an uncleaned or unrubbed house, sitting on a bare ground, eating of a meal without meat and must not sleep alone. On the seventh day he slaughtered a cow; thirty pieces and twenty pieces were used to cook foufou for the Edion and Igene respectively. Only those who had already performed the ceremony could partake of this meat. The remaining meat was used to prepare six calabashes of foufou for his age grade that turned up at night to eat their share. They divided themselves into Okhiode, Oberauan and Obiyuan, each group taking two calabashes of foufou.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CEREMONY:

Clothing ceremony was the most authoritative act of a man who desired honour and respect of all in the village. No man who had not performed it could be made Odionwele. While the laws attached to this ceremony conferred honour, distinction and marks of high social standing on the performer, he was strictly guided by certain laws calculated to make him live an honourable life for the rest of his life. These laws were:—

(a) He was duty bound to settle any dispute coming to his knowledge between a man and his wife.

(b) He could no longer be called upon to sweep the street or be challenged to a wrestling match or be attacked. Any attacker did so at the risk of having a goat slaughtered against him by the Edion.

(c) As a man of dignity he had to conduct himself honourably at all times and must never again do certain acts of dishonour like kneeling, stooling over paths, yam holes or moats (IYALA), or clean himself after defecation on a kolanut tree, telling lies, abetting crimes etc.

(d) He must not find a tree across the farm path and side-track it saying it was none of his business to help cut it off.

(e) He could no longer sit on bare ground and hence had to carry ẸKPOKIN about and on this he sat.

(f) If it fell to his turn he could now be made an Odionwele. If he was the oldest man in the village and he had not performed IRUEN he forfeited what his age had brought to him.

(g) In death, honour and respect followed him to the grave: with or without children he must be fully clothed before burial. In the olden days a man who had not performed this ceremony was, on death, buried as he was born, NAKED.

15. Feasts And Relaxation:

The year in Ishan was divided into 91½ FARMING WEEKS, consisting of THREE working days and ONE day of rest, every FIFTH DAY. The first day of the week fell on Ekpoma, Igueben, Ugboha,

Okhuesan and Ekpon market day. It was called EDUGBO NỌ DĪỌN. The universal day of rest was called ẸDẸ IZẸLẸ Or ẸDẸ ỌWỌ or ẸDẸ EKẸN and farming on that day was tabooed. This day fell on Ewu, Ilushi, Igor and Ewatto market day. The fact that none of the big markets was held on this day supports the belief that it was meant to be a proper day of rest.

The year was again divided into nameless MOONS which were tagged with farming stages as Moon for bush clearing, Moon for sowing yams, Moon for tying yams, moon for eating Fresh Corn etc. The year ended in December and particularly in Ekpoma, it ended round about December 24th. After harvesting yams, usually between August and October, there were little farming activities and then began a long period of debauchery, relaxation, the yearly village feasts, ceremonies of all types, like burial, clothing etc., and as the devil finds work for the idle hands, this time of the year was the time for "Meetings" and the few agitations that occur in Ishan.

Most of the yearly feasts in towns and villages took place between September and December. From the end of the first week of December, particularly in Ekpoma area, the ancestral worship ceremonies for ending the year began. All first sons with no fathers using the central yam (OJIỌKPALUNGBO), serve their dead fathers and perform the ceremonies of IKUKPE which lasted 13 days — the end falling round about Christmas Eve. This was the traditional end of the year, after which every man could begin clearing the bush for his new farm.

Every village or town usually had its dance for relaxation, for example, AGBENOJIE, AGBEGA, EGBABỌNẸLINMIN, OLẸKẸ etc. For the first three days of the "week" it was all toil, but early the fourth day the street and village square were weeded and swept, the women rubbed the houses and kept the compound clean. One could sense a festive mood in everybody who had a wash and put on his best clothes. By about 10 o'clock the village dance was staged and the rest of the day was reserved for drinking and visiting friends. To make sure that everyone had his own fair share of necessary rest and relaxation there was a strong belief handed down from father to son, that spirits did their farming by wandering round the farms of the living on Ede Izele or Owo or Ẹkẹn. The lazier ones took an extra day of rest on the town market day — ẸDẸ ẸKIOLELE.

Apart from this weekly day of rest, each village had a period of feasting on a grand scale at about the same period each year. It lasted four days. The period was characteristic for the special clearing of the streets, decorations in the homes, purchase of new clothes with friends and relatives coming from far and near bringing dances and presents. It was an expressed mutual agreement for one to return this type of visit and presents when the village of these visitors were having their own annual feast.

These yearly feasts invariably left the celebrants exhausted and broke and by the time they recovered it was time for the next year's feast! Also with so much eating and drinking something near an epidemic of stomach trouble followed!

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

A. ACTS OF RESPECT:

The Ishans are a very polite tribe and as would be expected from a people wedded to kinship in all their activities, and the constant fear of causing the ire of the departed spirits, they are very constitutional and have a great respect for old age and traditions. For example,

(i) CHILDREN TO PARENTS: Children with good manners never called their parents by their names; the father was ABA while the mother went by INẸNNẸN or IYIỌMẸN.

(ii) WIFE TO HUSBAND: Wives never referred to their husbands by name; however much older the wife was than the husband she never called him by name. Though we did not have the Yoruba or Ibo custom of calling a man by a name derived from a combination of the first child's name and the word 'FATHER' in the native tongue, for example, a man whose first child was ITUA would be called BABITUA, in Ishan if a wife was asked to call the husband she would walk up to him and say, "You are called," rather than shout at his name. She invariably referred to the husband as ỌLE (Him).

Similarly, juniors, particularly children, if well bred, never referred to their elders by name; it would be the height of rudeness for a young man to ask an older man for his name, whether the young person intended to call the name or not. I very well remember an incident which made this custom indelible in my mind. It was at the Out-patient Department of the Zuma Memorial Hospital. The nurse in attendance was a very intelligent girl of 17. As patients came she asked for their names which she wrote on their cards — quite a routine affair. But one morning in trotted an old man of about 70 propped up on his help-mate, the ỌKPỌ. "Give me paper, my child," he said fatherly. "Where do you come from?" demanded the nurse.

"Eilu, my child."

"What is your name?" went on the nurse innocently.

The old man took one long look at the girl, shuddered and exclaimed, 'O—O———O———O! Is that your way here?" He then told the bewildered girl that the name was ẸHIZOJIE. The next question brought a reaction which to the onlookers could have been produced by the girl landing a blow on the old man's hairless head. The question was logically the next that should follow if the nurse were to write the man's full name, but to the old man it was the last straw in the series of rude questions by a mere 'Child'! The question the innocent girl asked, ignorant of Ishan custom was, "And your father's name?"

"AMIỌ ỌBHEBHE!" (This's another!), exclaimed the exasperated aged man. "You asked for my name, which was bad enough; I told you and now you want to know the name of my father! I can't remember when last I had that relative!" So saying he went out in a huff!

(iii) ON DRINKING WATER: When an elder, a chief or a father was drinking water or wine, the junior onlookers rubbed their hands together saying, "GBE SẸ SẸ, GBE SẸ SẸ!" if they were female, but the male members of the gathering, using the right hand on the left, flipped the left little finger against the left palm to produce a snapping noise. A wife knelt down to give water or any drinks to the husband.

A big man or an elder did not take his cup of palm wine straight from the server — a junior had to 'mouth' it first! Sometimes, as a result of many juniors 'anxious' to show their respect having 'mouthed it'

round, the cup was as good as empty, by the time he handled it. Yet he never complained since in Ishan custom it was a big disgrace for an elder or a big man to grumble or show greed as regards food.

(iv) SNEEZING: Sneezing was believed to be due to some distant person having called the name of the sneezer, most probably, for bad. When a person sneezed therefore, those around cried out, "Not You!" Some greeted him, "Welcome!" If it was a junior who sneezed, he gave the general greeting to those around, according to the sneezer's sex.

(v) KOLANUTS: You might later give a man even a wife, but there was one thing in Ishan custom the host must first do to show the guest that he was welcome to the house: That was the presentation of kolanuts. There were customary ways of doing this; after repeated OBOKHIAN (Welcome), the host apologised for the scarcity of kolanuts, and almost immediately, a boy or wife came along with the nuts, just said to be so rare as to be unavailable! As soon as this happened a gathering which hitherto might have been well-behaved or shy, was suddenly animated; there was bound to be some argument, however the host or members in the gathering might know the custom. Often the arguments were noisy enough to make a stranger to Ishan wonder if the people in the gathering had not been old enemies who had been thirsty for one another's blood! The reason was to be found in the Ishan custom: if the people in the gathering were natives of the same district, the oldest had the prerogative of breaking the nuts; of course he had to be a man; a woman however old would not attempt to break these nuts before men! Everybody knew these provisions but what most people did not know, particularly if the people came from different villages of the same district, was how to tell who was the oldest man in the gathering. Since there was no registration of birth, it took a long time and much shaking of clenched fists to go through the wars fought or the forests farmed when each member was born! Any wonder at the acrimonious arguments!

At last order was restored and someone was finally agreed to be the oldest, and to him the kolanuts were taken. He, amidst blessings first for the host, then for those in the gathering and finally for himself, broke one of the nuts, usually 2 to 5. A piece was given to the host first before everybody took his piece; the man to whom fell the honour of breaking the kolanuts pocketed or "bagged" the unbroken nuts (ỌDIỌN HA VA OKOKO LO!), a nice way of saying he must have some reward for his labour.

But if the gathering was made up of men from different districts, the order of breaking was known to two 'degrees': if a Bini was present he automatically had to break the kolanuts. If no such person was present and an Irrua man was present, he had the undisputed right to deal with the gift. This right came to every Irrua man irrespective of his age by virtue of the Ogirrua being the Okaijesan, leader of the Ishan Enijie when they assembled, here in Ishan and at the palace in Benin City.

I have striven without success to find out what was the order when in a gathering of Ishans there were no Irrua or Benin people. What I have found to obtain is confused and selfish. The answer I got to the question, who came next after Irrua, told me the identity of the man answering the question. All Uromi men invariably told me it was Uromi, while Ekpoma swore it was Ekpoma. Frankly I found inconclusive evidence to be able to place the order of merit, as it were, amongst Uromi, Ekpoma and Ewohimi. Suffice it to say that the order after Irrua, de-

pended upon the strength of the ruling Onojie in each of these towns, and hence it would be correct to say that no such order of precedence existed.

(vi) PALM WINE: This had to be served in a gathering strictly according to age, and with the same cup, of course. If a man was given a cup, for fear of offending the departed spirits he carefully checked around to be sure he was not drinking before those who were his seniors. Elders often asked a loved junior to have a sip before he drank what was left. The last cup from the calabash (the server strove to be able to have just a full cup at the end) was brought to the most elderly of the gathering, with the announcement that everything was now in order. The server was then blessed and asked to have a mouthful before the old man drank off the remaining with the debris!

There was a custom which regulated what to do with the empty calabash of wine. An empty calabash had to be 'downed,' that is, it must be placed on its side as soon as it was empty. It must never be left standing, empty! This arose from the hospitality of the Ishans. If a gathering was sitting over a keg of palm wine and visitors who might be total strangers came in they had to be served. If the calabash had been emptied and was left standing late comers might think there was something still left and that the people were just downright inhospitable. That would hurt the kind spirit of the Ishan man; therefore no room must be left for such a mistake and so custom decreed that all empty calabashes must be placed flat.

(vii) THE PIPE: The well known Ishan pipe was the Pipe of friendship, the long pipe called OBO-ODO. It was a communal affair for after it had been fired, a job usually done by the youngest in the gathering or a small boy in the house, it was smoked starting from the most senior and working down the scale. Each man limited his enjoyment to one long pull! Spread of infection? Never: "Diseases were the evil work of witches and angry departed spirits!"

(viii) PRESENTS: Non-Ishans are often caught by these. If an Ishan brought you presents, for example, yams, or palm wine, he expected some thanks in the form of money or in kind. It would be the duty of the man to whom the presents were brought to quietly assess the value of the presents and show "YOUR APPRECIATION" by giving something higher, when the visitor was leaving. In most cases it was a form of trade!

B. GREETINGS:

The Ishans had forms of salutations to suit the morning or evening and according to sex. Juniors always greeted their seniors first. It was a mockery for an elder to greet an erring junior first. Usually the women except the aged, greeted the men first.

The all hour greeting for men was KHARA which translated literarily was meaningless. The nearest translation is "Be a thief." From a prolonged research I found that though the Binis have a similar salutation for the Oba "Ghara Ọmọ!" they have no translation for the Ghara. I am inclined to think that it was a corrupt form of the Yoruba "RỌRA O!" (Be careful!). To a strange Ishan ear this might have sounded as ṘARA O! which is not too far from KHARA O! This is certainly more understandable than a junior, however mannerless, seeing his senior during the day and advising him to please be a thief! when as a matter of fact practically every Ishan greeting is a form of blessing or praise. Khara could be used by a man any time of the day or night. But in places like Ekpoma, Irrua, Ugbegun, Opoji etc. it was the salutation of choice by men after the evening meal.

1. MORNING SALUTATION

(a) MEN: Morning salutation differed according to Ishan Districts; men from Ekpoma, Opoji, Irrua, Ewu, Ugbegun, Ubiaja and Ebelle greeted with AESAN! This was from LA' ESAN meaning "Hail Ishan." Some people said that the word came from the Benin salutation for and by the members of the Ezomo, LAIJESAN. Actually the Ezomo came to have this specific salutation because he was the intermediary for many of the Ishan Enijie, particularly those of Ewohimi; thus he was more closely connected with Ishan Enijie than most other chiefs in Benin, hence his salutation of LAIJESAN which was "May it please you, the King of Esan!"

Men in Ugboha, Emu etc. say RANEA or AANEA which was derived from the sentence UKHA SE EA which literarily means "You will reach Three." Every Ishan man prays to be quite old before he dies. In Ishan old men were known by their dreaded ỌKPỌ. The older they became the more dependent they became on their ỌKPỌ. The very old ones could not walk or stand without this prop, thus it appeared as if they had three legs. So by praying for one that he will reach the age when he will need a THIRD leg one was giving him the best blessings possible!

(b) WOMEN: Morning salutations for women varied a great deal throughout Ishan depending also upon the derivation of the woman's family. Most of the greetings were brought down by the early immigrants from our City of Origin, Benin. As the different people in one town could possibly hail from different parts of Benin it is not surprising to see women from different quarter in an Ishan village giving different morning salutations.

The common one was DO ẸIJIE in Ekpoma, Irrua, Ewu and Uromi. LAMOGUN or LABHOJIE in Ugboha and Ubiaja areas, (LA-HỌR OMOGUN or OBHIOJE meaning MAY IT PLEASE YOU, OBA or Prince). These Royalty salutations were used for and by those who descended from the Royal family of Benin. Ebelle and Emu women greeted with LA-BO or PLEASE DOCTOR which shows that such families descended from native doctors. Uromi women apropos to the kind heart of Uromi people, greeted with DIJIE, U WẸLE and go further with EBURẸ KO UHỌNMỌN WẸLE? ("Greetings, did you sleep well"? and adding, "Did your pillow have a rest?"). Obviously a man who had had a bad nightmarish night would be the man whose pillow would have suffered the greatest tossing and squeezing!

Many women used DOẸJIE as a common all hour salutation even though the correct time was morning. Some, particularly amongst the older ones, greeted with just AIJE missing out the common Ishan salutation of "DO".

2. AFTERNOON SALUTATIONS

To elders and acquaintances men greeted with KHARA while both sexes to other people gave the common greeting of DO-O ! or merely OBOKHIAN (Welcome) if the person was returning from the farm, market or from a walk. When a man was a stranger or a visitor to a compound an 'O' was added to the common male greeting — KHARA O! If the person being greeted was an adult male, the visitor could say KHARA ABA.

3. EVENING SALUTATIONS

After evening meal it was incumbent for all subordinates like children and women to salute. Boys stamped one foot on the ground and told their father KHARA, without the O! The evening greeting for females varied a great deal. Girls said in Ugboha and Ubiaja areas, DẸKẸLẸ while all other females said ẸIJESAN which as it stands and sounds meant "Do not laugh at Ishan!" but really is an abbreviation of LAIJESAN. In some places women's evening salutations were definitely blessings. In Ugboha the grown-ups said AGBỌMỌWARE (You will be blessed with children). In Ebelle women said after food USIỌMỌKHISIẸ (May you be fruitful) while in Emu it was IKHIKHUGBE-Ẹ which really is UUKHIGBE-Ẹ (May death not kill you!).

Sometimes these greetings were varied; a question might replace the common and usual greetings as, WẸ WẸLE? (Did you sleep?). Since a junior should greet a senior first an affectionate senior could help out an erring junior with this type of question. This was very common with parents and when so prompted the erring junior realised his fault and immediately gave his greeting.

4. ENDING SENTENCES

This was another act of respect practised in Ishan. It consisted of repeating the end or helping to end sentences. Usually the speaker was a person the listener very much respected or was very shy before him. This habit, I think, is not peculiar to Ishans. It is a trait of very timid and nervous people, always anxious to please.

C. EMERGENCY CRIES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE:

In the olden Ishan custom every member of the community, as has been seen, was like a finger of the hand, it gripped or loosened with the other fingers of the hand. One man's concern was every villager's matter. Death of one man in a quarter meant mourning and abstention from work or market by all members of the village. A call for help was answered by the whole able-bodied community. These calls were often peculiar to a particular district and only members of that area knew the significance. When such a call came the whole village acted with an uncanny understanding which would leave a stranger bewildered. This element of secret understanding was of vital significance for it enabled the community to escape from an overwhelming enemy or repel an attacker, without the stranger knowing that the sounds being emitted connoted specific sentences for which there were specific group reactions. These cries were our own form of talking drum as it were!

There were some of these group calls that were universal in Ishan and some that were peculiar to some districts.

(1) General Call of Alertness or Emergency:

The cry was OKHOKHO-OGO-O! Sometimes all the 'KH' were replaced with 'G' while the 'O' was replaced with 'U' throughout. On hearing this sound all must stop and listen for the specific cries that would follow. This cry is in Ishan described generally as ỌGBẸGOGO URULUA (He has opened the bell of the voice!). Irresponsible use of it was punished with a goat slaughtered against the alarmist.

(ii) FIRE! OKHOKHO-OGO-O ! IRU !

On hearing this last part of the alarm every grown up male snatched his cutlass and must make for the direction from

which the cries were coming; a fire must be put out!

(iii) DANGER ! ẸKHẸ KHẸ ẸKẸ-Ẹ !

(iv) THIEVES ! UGU-KHU-GU-U ! or EGE-KHE-GE-E ! The more excitable criers added GHO OYI! (IT'S A THIEF!) On hearing this cry all males must answer it and one answered it at once not by making for the direction from which the cries were coming but by snatching a sharp matchet or heavy cudgel and making a cut-through to the nearest road from the direction of the cries. Thus in a matter of minutes all possible roads to the site where the thief was seen were guarded. The reason for this is that a thief's first reaction to an alarm is to put as much distance as possible between himself and the man raising the hue and cry! On hearing this cry therefore everybody knew that a thief was about the neighbourhood of the crier and since it was every good citizen's duty to help catch a thief, the surest way was to make a bee-line for all the roads leading away from the alarmist, an attempt to block the marauder's exit. Hence the correct way to answer this call was to go AWAY rather than TO the man crying.

(v) SUDDEN DEATHS: OGOGO-KHOGO-O! HE-EHE! HE-EHE! This cry summoned everyone to the spot from which the cry came.

(vi) SHOCKING BAD NEWS: OGOGO-KHOGO-O! HEU ! HEU! and in Ekpoma area this alarm was heightened with ỌSẸ-ẸWẸ-Ẹ! On hearing this cry everybody made for the vicinity to demand what the news was about and to sympathise with the crier.

(vii) SEVERE FIGHT: OGOGO-KHOGO-O! EA GBO NEGBE-A! This summoned all the he-men of the village to the spot to prevent the fighters from committing manslaughter!

(viii) WIFE BEING BEATEN AT NIGHT! OGOGO-OKHO-O! All relatives had to go and save an unyielding woman at the hands of an irate husband!

(ix) WAR! OGOGO-KHOGO-O! OKHỌLẸN RELE ! and in some places the word OKHỌLẸN (war) was never mentioned but people knew from the peculiar cry that they must put a safe distance between themselves and the alarmist. Yet another cry was ARAN-RAN-RAN-AN! It needed urgent and imperative response from everybody.

(x) CALLING ALL EDION: ỌKHISẸMẸKHỌLẸN O! This cry was ignored by the Igene and Egbonughele but in a twinkle of an eye, wizened old men were seen tottering along from all directions of the village to the Okoughele or to the Odionwele's house: may be there was some goat flesh to be shared!

(xi) CALLING THE HE-MEN OF THE VILLAGE: OBỌIGBAOTỌ-O! On hearing this cry which might be given without actually pronouncing the words, all those above 60, if not already taking a long pull from their OBO-ODO, reached for that pipe of peace, asked a small boy to load and light it, reclined on their beds and between puffs, ejaculated reminiscences "when the world WAS the world!" Meantime all the strong men of the village from 30 upwards lept like frogs to the village square!

(xii) CALLING THE SCAVENGERS OF THE VILLAGE: ỌKHISO-BỌMẸRIA O! Knowing that theirs was to toil for the

betterment of the village, each Egbonughele snatched his working clothes and armed with a matchet, made for the direction of the cry!

(xiii) CALL FOR WORK: U-KU-GHU !

(xiv) CALL FOR REJOICING: UKU-GHUGHU or OKO-GHOGHO ! All friends of the family in the neighbourhood of the cry, went armed with chalk or prepared for an orgy of revelry or uninhibited debauchery!

(xv) SUMMONING MEN FOR THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD: EGEGE-KHE-E GE-E! which in words is ODEDE SO OTỌLI IDIA O ! (A body has fallen !)

(xvi) CALLING EACH OTHER IN THE BUSH: U KU GHU? which in words is U VAE? (Have you come?)

CHAPTER VIII

A. MARKETS

1. From time immemorial two types of marketing existed in Ishan. These were:—

(a) SILENT TRADE:

This went on practically in every village, and all along the streets, particularly in front of houses having a wide ready access, articles of trade like soap, coconuts, pepper, groundnuts etc., were exposed for sale; they were divided up, each division being sold for ỌGBỌLỌ (20 Cowries). The seller might be miles away, working in her farm; all she did was to come in the evening to collect her money with the articles that had been unsold. In those days when people believed in the power of straightforward departed spirits, the justice of the Okoven and the sure destruction by jujus, the moral code was high. The woman exposing her articles for sale merely placed a piece of IDIGUN (god of iron) in the centre of the container and went her way knowing the respect for this juju would produce the same result as if she was sitting there to see that there was no cheating. A buyer coming along knew according to sizes that each portion cost Ogbolo; so he took what he wanted and dropped the equivalent in Cowries. It was easy and honest trade — sparing both the seller and the buyer the usual noisy harangue over even the smallest sale. With the Ishans not just losing their beliefs in jujus, but through the dishonesty that grows with civilization, any seller today trying silent trade by which our grandmothers prospered, would get ruined — not only her goods but the very juju caretaker would be stolen, the Idigun being sold to scrap-metal dealers!

(b) OPEN MARKETS:

In those days of terrible inter-tribal wars, when might was right, markets as they exist today were unknown. There were the ẸKIOLELE — small markets in the village square. As to be expected only members of the village could attend such markets. It would be suicidal for a woman to leave her husband's village at Uromi, for instance, to attend a market at Irrua or Ekpoma. If she attempted it, she might, if lucky, be caught and made a wife of the captor, otherwise she would be sold to slave dealers. In many places therefore the markets were small, primitive and held under trees surrounded by bush to make escape easy in case of attacks by raiding slave traders.

2. Establishment of Markets:

Two villages, usually bound by OKOVEN, deciding to have a common market, would come together round about the Okoven, to clear a piece of ground; if they were not already bound by Okoven, they took the oath of friendship and faithfulness, and the market was established, fixing a day for it and also fixing prices at ludicrously low rates to encourage people to attend.

With the gradual cessation of the destructive tribal wars, order crept into Ishan life. Markets grew in each of the big districts and to prevent chaos, the leaders had to meet. Fixing of the various market days was one of the few reasons that brought the individualistic Enijie together in the olden days. It was easy to see that with two nearby towns putting their markets on the same day neither would have sufficient attendance to grow or have good trade, hence the Enijie had to meet to so arrange the days that only towns that were so far apart that they could not attend each other's market in any case, held their markets

Ighanlan Canoe Women disembarking at the fish market, OJIGOLO. Though by March the River Niger is here down by about 40 feet, this dangerous gradient being scaled by this woman using a paddle as a support, is swallowed up entirely by the August flood.

Dried and carved gourds particularly the types imported by Ighanlan people (OKPINGHANLAN) were replaced by European plates and dishes in the last 20 years.

on the same day, e.g. Ekpoma and Ugboha on the same day while Irrua and Ebelle had theirs on the same day. Neither of the combinations could draw the other. Sometimes a migratory set of people continued to hold their market in their new home on the same day as was done in the original home. Examples of this are to be seen in Ekpoma and Ekpon, Irrua and Opoji etc.

3. Principal Market Days in Ishan:

It will be seen that real thought over prevention of friction was given by our forefathers in arranging the market days in Ishan.

1ST. DAY OF THE FARMING WEEK:

Ekpoma, Ibore, Okhuesan, Ugboha, Igueben, Ekpon etc.

2ND. DAY:

Irrua, Opoji, (the nearness did cause trouble!) Ebelle, Ubiaja, Ohordua etc.

3RD. DAY:

Uromi, Iruekpen, Ewohimi (Ofuri) etc.

4TH. DAY (ẸDẸ IZẸLẸ, OR ẸDẸ ỌWỌ OR ẸDẸ ẸKẸN):

Ewu, Ilushi (Ojigolo), Igor, Ewatto etc.

Each market from the above arrangements was held every four days, that is EVERY FIFTH DAY.

Night markets have never been known in Ishan. Even after the tribal wars, the distance between the towns were such that night markets could have been quite impracticable. All markets, as now, were held during the day. The larger ones were attended as early as possible while markets in the smaller and poorer areas were attended later in the day; but most markets began at about 10 in the morning, becoming full by mid-day; by 2 p.m. people began to disperse for home and by 5 p.m. it was nearly all over.

B. CURRENCY SYSTEM

Trade by barter has never been known in Ishan. From time immemorial the COWRIES had formed the currency all over the area and only disappeared from the markets in the early thirties. Even after the introduction of the present coins, cowries continued to be a legal tender for quite a long time since they were still in demand for some of the important ceremonies such as funerals, when they were sprayed out for the surging crowd to fight for; they were used at juju worships, for making certain medicines like EDAI etc.

The greatest drawback to the use of Cowries as money was their weight and bulk—about 100 Cowries weighed, when fresh and of full size, a pound, and this in modern money was equivalent to onehalf of a penny! The smallest unit in the present coinage being half a penny, it was found that even this was too high for the low cost of living of the people and so the ỌNINI which was one-tenth of a penny and equivalent to the smallest unit, ỌGBỌLỌ, in the Cowry system was introduced. The Onini and Ogbolo disappeared together.

(i) THE ARITHMETIC OF COWRIES!

A currency that depended upon its bulk for value, was really difficult if not cumbersome to reckon and within ten years of its getting out of circulation only the old men could correctly give the correct computations and their values. According to numbers Cowries formed well known units with definite numbers:—

Twenty Cowries made ỌGBỌLỌ which was equivalent to an ỌNINI or one-tenth of a penny.

3 ỌGBỌLỌ made IYEHA.
7 ỌGBỌLỌ " IKIỌKHỌ (ỌKHỌ).
10 ỌGBỌLỌ " ULIGHO or 200 Cowries equivalent to one penny.
13 IKIỌKHỌ " ỌKHIGBELEA.
20 IKIỌKHỌ " ELAMẸN EA or 2,800 Cowries equivalent to 1/2d.

Therefore Elamen ea = ỌKHUJE = 1/2d.
Therefore 1 Elamen = $\frac{2,800}{3}$ Cowries = four - two - thirds of one penny.

But UE or UJE = 20 Elamen = $\frac{2,800 \times 20}{3}$ Cowries = ẸBỌ

Thus Elamen UJE = UJE or UE or ẸBỌ $\frac{2,800 \times 20}{3}$ which is

about = $18,666\frac{2}{3}$ Cowries

= $7/9\frac{1}{3}$d. or 7/9d to the nearest.

Therefore ẸBỌ ISẸN = $\frac{2,800}{3}$ x 20 x 5 Cowries.

= 1/2d x $\frac{100}{3}$ = $38/10\frac{2}{3}$d. which is about

= £1: 18: 11d.

Other well known denominations in the Cowry System were:—
ỌGBAN = 30 ELAMEN or $1\frac{1}{2}$ EBỌ.
IKIGBESEA = UJE + UJE + ELAMEN IGBE = 50 ELAMEN.

(ii) Common Values:

Now that we know how to reckon money in Cowries we are in a position to understand how hard life was in those days in Ishan.

(a) IGHISẸN or 5 Cowries was the cost of the smallest piece of native soap, UDẸN (palm kernel oil), EKAKA (Corn Biscuit) etc.
(b) A wife, if fully grown, 'cost' between Ebo EA and Ebo ISEN (3 — 5 Ebos): people of Ewu area particularly Eko Ojemen were notorious for fleecing their prospective sons-in-law, demanding anything up to ẸBỌ IHINLỌN (7 Ebos). The 'cost' of a wife, in modern money, sounds very ridiculous, being equal to £1: 18: 11d!
(c) A cow cost anything up to EBỌ EA nearly 7/9d x 3 or £1: 3: 4d.
(d) The heaviest fine the Council of Elders could inflict was ODEWE BI ẸLAMEN EA, that is A SHE-GOAT AND 2,800 Cowries.

Often money in Cowries was substituted for the she-goat and on the whole the whole fine was not more than about 2/6d by modern reckoning!

Though a wife cost about £1: 18: 11d which a man now could put in his HIP POCKET and no father-in-law would be any wiser, a suitor going to pay the Bride Price of ẸBI ISẸN on his wife, had to hire some 5 to 7 carriers for EBI ISEN (5 Ebos)

= $\frac{2,800 \times 20 \times 5}{3}$ Cowries

Which nearly = 93,333 Cowries, and since about 100 fresh Cowries weigh 1 lb. the Cowries for one wife would weigh some

$$\frac{93{,}333 \text{ lbs.}}{100}$$

$$= 933 \text{ lbs.}$$

$$= 8\tfrac{1}{3} \text{cwt.}$$

No father-in-law would fail to be impressed by a suitor followed by 7 hefty men bent by the weight of Cowries — the colour and feel of which was as good as Dollars to an American!

(iii) Present Values of Cowries:

Cowries ceased to have any monetary values in the early thirties. After that they were mainly at burial ceremonies, for the making of Edai, for sacrificial ceremonies etc. Now that they have become museum pieces, rarity has added to their value. Though they are not much in demand the few who have to use them for these things find the supply so short that they are prepared to pay something like black market prices for them. The present value at Ilushi Market (1953) is 10 Cowries for 1d—up in price 20 times their old value when they were the money current in Ishan. In bulk, a kerosene-tinful sells at 22/-.

It will be necessary to warn the reader not to laugh too readily when he reads that a wife in the days gone by cost about £1: 18: 11d. There is hardly any equivalent between modern values of Cowries and the hard currency they were before the advent of the white man. This £1: 18: 11d as has been seen was for a load of 93,333 Cowries. It took some people a lifetime to put together!

CHAPTER IX

1. DOMESTIC ANIMALS

THERE were two types of domestic animals — the tamed ones like fowls, goats and dogs which lived with man and were either penned or tied up for the night in the compound or house, and the semi-wild ones like sheep, pigs and cows which roamed wild in the village street. Well-looked-after ones in the latter type came fairly regularly to the owner's compound to be given garbage for food.

Each man had to put identifying marks or brands on his animals, for example, piercing or cutting of the ears in a distinctive way known to himself, friends and members of his family, or he might tie something like a chain or bell round the necks of his animals.

Wealthier owners sometimes gave out an animal to a friend, a serviceable or respectful man to look after. In this case special laws and custom guarded ownership of both the animal called the head and the offsprings, depending upon the type of animal. The idea in most cases was to enable a man to raise the type of animal in his family and hence only the female members were so given. The owner could remove the 'head' any time he wished.

(i) FOWLS, DOGS AND PIGS:

These being animals that could have several young ones at one litter while the mother always belonged to the owner, the young ones were shared EQUALLY between the owner and the caretaker of the animal right from the first time the animal had young ones. If there were three young ones, the owner took two, since he had to choose first while the keeper had one. When the time for sharing came, the keeper took a small present like a bundle of yams and a calabash of wine to the owner's house.

(ii) COWS:

A cow was the most expensive possession of a man and it was found in the family of the Onojie, chiefs and the very wealthiest of the commoners. It was not an animal that could be seen at every village; This animal had this unique importance not because of its meat but because of the many vital ceremonies in which it was significant. A really big cow cost about EBO EA which equals $\frac{2,800 \times 20 \times 3}{3}$ Cowries; This equals 56,000 Cowries or 23/4d.

The formalities leading to a man giving another a cow to look after was itself, expensive: one had to go to make the request with

a. ỌKHỌ EHAN (Six Ikiokho).
b. A basket of 7 yams (AKHUEMAN) and
c. An intermediary to whom the owner would find difficult to say 'NO'.

To report to the head owner that the cow had calved was another expense: an AKHUEMAN!

(a) SYSTEM OF DIVISION:

To a non-Ishan enquirer the law of division would appear to be confused primarily because of many circumstances. By 1930—1940 cows had become so cheap that all values and formalities surrounding them were neglected and people just did what they liked. With the spread of Christianity, education and the OSẸNUWEGBE CULT, many of the hitherto essential ceremonies of manhood like IRUẸN, Burial Ceremonies, Ogbe etc., where the cow was the prominent animal

required, began to lose their meaning and importance: so did the cow! In fact cows disappeared from many villages. With scarcity, of course, the price began to rise again. With these ups and downs in the value and importance of cows in Ishan it is not surprising that very few people today can say offhand what the actual custom surrounding 'division' of cows was.

The general and basic law is that there is no question of sharing or the keeper getting an offspring until the FOURTH CALVING. The first, second and third calves belonged to the head owner. If the FOURTH was a bull the keeper could refuse it and wait till the next time. In practice, since the keeper was anxious to have a cow of his own in his family, a cow that was getting male offsprings was merely doing its owner good. The first female calf after the THIRD calving belonged to the keeper.

Having sent a basket of 7 yams to report the arrival of the new calf, when this had grown up, the keeper prepared for the formalities of sharing if it was customarily his turn, that is, after the third calving. He had to get a calabash of palm oil and a basket of 7 yams; others saved the owner's wife the trouble of cooking by actually cooking a EMA (foufou) with respectable soup, which he brought to the owner's place. If the present was adjudged sufficient he was given this young cow which by then was about 9 to 12 months old and the whole arrangement started all over again. He had no hope of getting any share again until the 8th calving, which meant that every fourth calf was his, as long as the owner allowed him to keep the cow.

(b) OWNER—KEEPER RELATION:

When a man had given an animal to another to look after there was a definite relation between the owner and the keeper. It was an 'IN-LAW' relationship and in the case of a cow this relationship was as close and as exerting on the part of the keeper as if he had been given an EBẸẸ, a young child he had to look after till she grows up to become his wife. The caretaker had to render services like going to assist in the owner's farm, bringing logs of wood for night fires, sending of a bundle of 7 yams, a calabash of palm wine during the yearly festival thus giving the benefactor all the services of a good son-in-law. One had to do this all the time to remain in the owner's good books, since he could rescind the arrangement as soon as the first sharing had been done if he found the keeper not serviceable.

Although this was the system in most parts of Ishan, there were certain variations in certain parts that must be mentioned. In Ebelle area all the keeper wanted being to have a cow in his family, he was only given a share ONCE AND ONCE ONLY. To some extent this was the system in Emu and Ohordua areas. After the owner had given the keeper the cow to look after, the latter had to pay certain things as quickly as possible, for until he had paid this due, he could not hope to get a share. Any time before this the cow calved, since the keeper had not yet fulfilled all the owner—keeper known agreements, the cow had only CALVED IN HARNESS (ỌBIẸ BHURI), and the owner appropriated the young ones. This is the custom as many times as the cow had been allowed to remain in this state; hence a wise keeper lost no time in paying these dues called EMIO OGA, which consisted of

a. A goat
b. 35 yams made into 7 bundles of 5 each,
c. A calabash of oil,
d. A head of tobacco,

e. A keg of palm wine and
f. Kolanuts and salt.

The other name for EMIO OGA was EMI EKHUN. All Emio Oga had to be sent to the owner through the intermediary, who like that in cases of EBEE, went by the name of ỌSUỌMAN. The Osuoman himself had to be given his share consisting of ELAMEN EA or 2,800 Cowries.

When this had been done the very first female calf belonged to the keeper. As soon as he had been so rewarded the in-law arrangement had technically come to an end; if he wanted to retain the cow (head) he must pay the customary dues if he hoped to be given another share in future.

Whichever system was adopted the owner was at liberty to take his cow back as soon as the keeper had got one calf, if he was found wanting in the services which custom demanded of him.

(c) Cow With Twins:

One custom which died out with the trimming of the autocratic wings of the Enijie surrounded cows. If a cow no matter who the owner was, or how far the village was from Eguare, had two calves at the same time, BOTH THE COW AND THE CALVES AUTOMATICALLY BECAME THE PROPERTY OF THE ONOJIE OF THE LAND. Custom added that the Onojie himself had to give the owner of this wonderful cow A PREGNANT WOMAN AND A CASTRATED HE-GOAT as a reward for his "good hand." In those days the Onojie had several female slaves and so there were no difficulties in his fulfilling his own part of the custom.

An interesting case happened in 1927 when ẸDẸTALẸN of UWENLENAFUA, Ekpoma gave Ishan Enijie the headache of their lives. His cow had had twins. By this time the greed of the Enijie had been much curbed by the present government, and so Edetalen, an influential man himself, thanked his luck and looked after his cow and calves. Soon, as usual, a cringing informant went to tell the late AKHIMIEN of Ekpoma of this rare happening. The Onojie at once sent instructions that Edetalen should send him the cow with the two calves according to custom. Edetalen would do no such thing, at least he knew the white man was near to protect him and his lawful property. After repeated warnings and threats, the Onojie realising how low the ebb of his authority had run since the advent of the Europeans, tried another face saving devise; he reported this gross act of challenge to constituted authority to the then Enijie Council holden at Ubiaja. The Enijie were furious, so much so that they shifted their meeting right to Ekpoma, a few hundred yards from the insubordinate subject that went by the name of Edetalen, who they were prepared to deal with in such a way that no one else throughout the length and breadth of Ishan would attempt to undermine their authority again. Recalcitrant Edetalen was summoned to Eguare and in one voice packed with authority, he was first welcomed with a fine of five solid pounds "FOR CALLING THE ONOJIE'S COWS HIS" and told to go home and fetch the cow and two calves, lawful property of AKHIMIEN ONOJIE of Ekpoma! Edetalen who was no fool knew his own side of Ishan Native Laws and Custom, and on his knees before the Enijie, he said he was quite prepared to bring the Cows to the Onojie according to the ruling of our custom, on the condition that he, the Onojie gave him a pregnant woman and a castrated he-goat. Obligingly he added that since he and the Onojie were cousins he was quite willing to forego the castrated he-goat, BUT THE PREGNANT WOMAN, HE MUST HAVE! All eyes then turned to Akhimien

who had no castrated he-goat in his possession. More important still was the fact that the only women Akhimien had authority upon were his wives; at that particular time none of them was pregnant and even if they were, he could not exchange his wife and child unborn for cows! There was hot air in the Council Chamber! The Enijie went into a hasty consultation and came out with a novelty in Ishan laws and custom: they knew if they allowed this man to get away with the challenge against a custom affecting an Onojie, soon they too would come face to face with greater challenges; Chief Akhimien was asked to give the man £10 in exchange for the cows! Edetalen respectfully stuck to the letter of Ishan laws and custom: it was a pregnant woman with a castrated he-goat or he kept his cows. Edetalen won!

2. ECONOMIC TREES

The system of giving animals to friends to look after could be extended to economic trees such as Dicanut trees, kolanut trees, coconut tree etc. Sometimes a man left his part of the village to settle in another end, leaving his trees behind at his old site. Realising that he was too far to take proper care of the fruits he requested a friend nearby to look after them. In such cases they shared the fruits together.

If a man gave a kolanut to another man to plant without expressly giving him the nut, the plant belonged to the owner of the kolanut; In certain parts of Ekpoma where the system of RẸKỌ MỌLẸN (PLANT THIS AND LOOK AFTER IT FOR ME) was known, there was joint ownership between the man who owned the nut and the man who planted it.

CHAPTER X

RELIGION

THE Ishans were polytheists, believing in the gods of the things in their environment, for example, god of earth, god of iron, god of medicine, god of fruition, god of trees, etc., but they believed in a Supreme Being omnipotent and perfectly just, without whose blessings none of the requests to any of the lesser gods could be granted. This Almighty they called OSẸNOBULUA or OGHODUA or ỌGHẸNA. He received no particular formof worship, had no particular shrine in most places—but his name was on the lips of all!

(i) Ancestral Worship :

Though this was a heathenish rite, it played a great part in the moulding of Ishan custom, moral code and the general law of ordered life. For example:

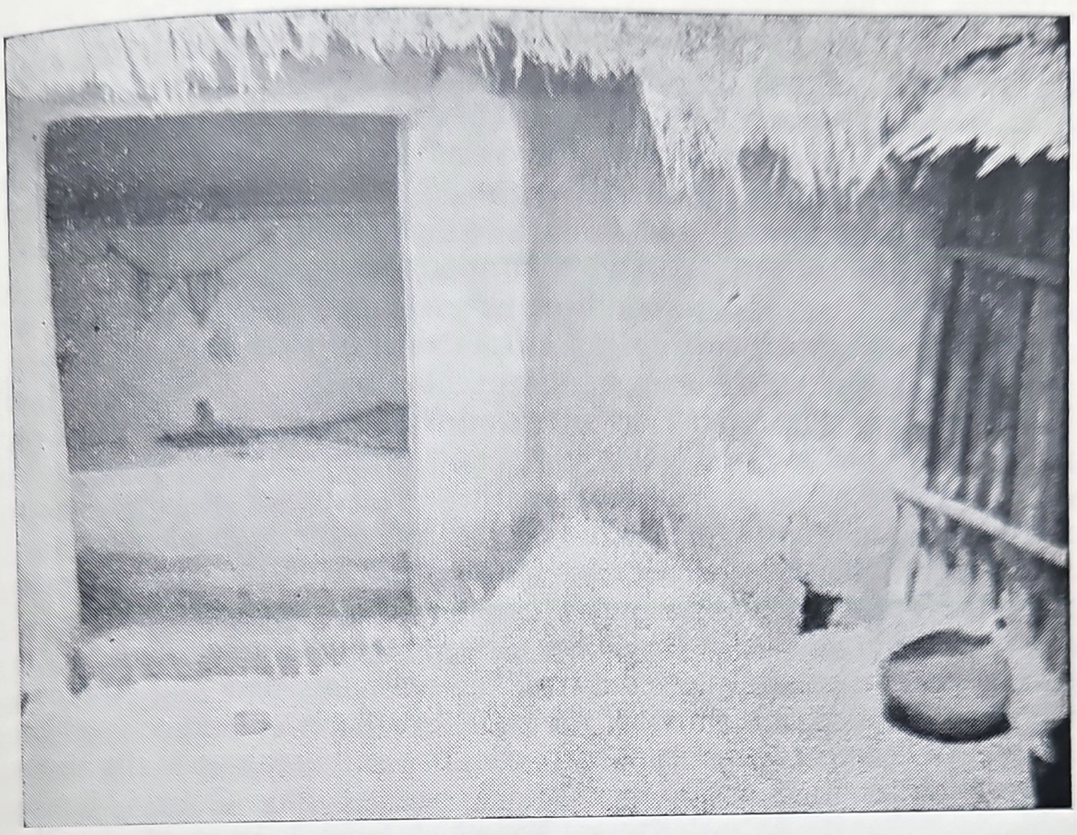
(a) It was the cement of goodwill and fear that kept the family as a unit and the village as a distinct community group.

(b) It made the married women of a community afraid of adulterous acts, ranging from mere handshaking through touch of clothes to the actual sexual act, and it was the one big deterrent for men of the same family or village of same patrikin, indulging in promiscuous sexual life. Any man who had even looked adulterously at his relative's wife sooner or later would be found out either when he fell sick or had to confess his sins or the woman, even if she did not yield to the adulterous man's attempts would have to confess these, when she herself was ill or her child or even the husband became ill.

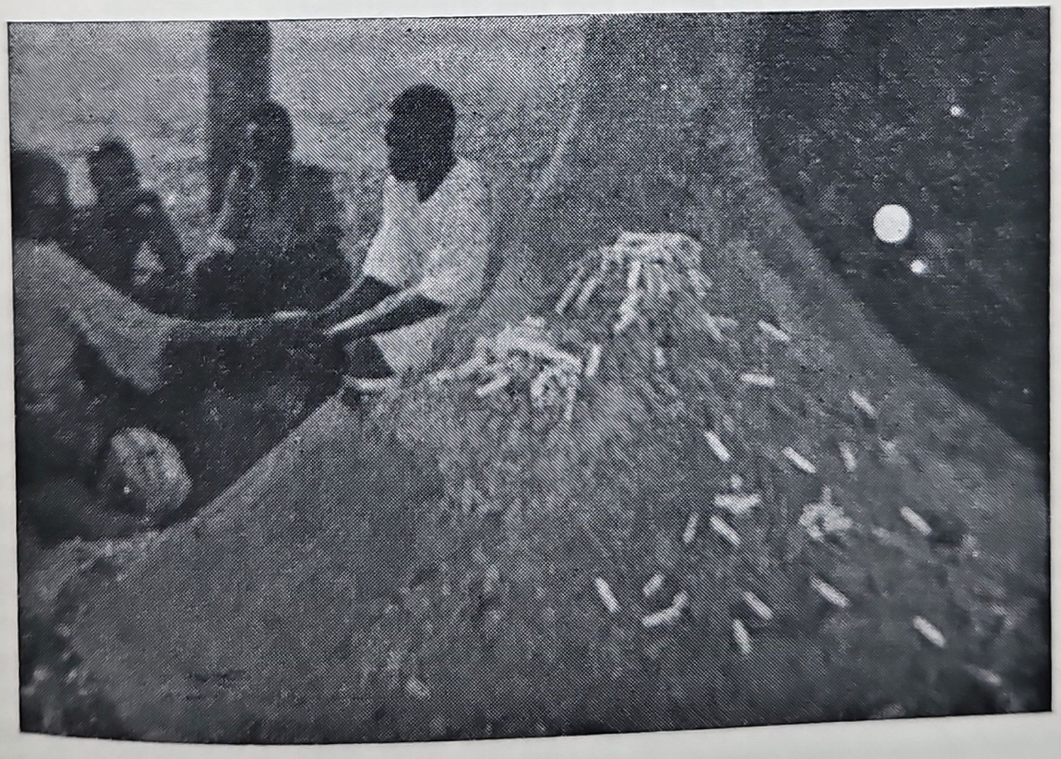
(c) No human being is born just—people try to be just for fear of God, fear of being found out if they were deliberately otherwise and, in Ishan, when everybody believed in the powers of the departed ancestors, people tried to be just for fear of offending the all-seeing spirits. Even where the ancestors were known to have led the most unjust and riotous lives, once they had passed to the great beyond, they demanded honesty and brotherly love from the children and relatives they had left behind: in fact, their retributive justice was most strict when crimes involving people of same blood were concerned.

(d) Most of Ishan history, culture and tradition were tied up with ancestral worship and the little the present old men can remember of their past is due to the oral transmission of knowledge and belief from one generation to another during the customary yearly worship of ancestors. At this worship, the chief worshipper recited the names of the ancestors, as near as possible chronologically and when there was any question of correct order or arguments involving any genealogical tree, people turned to the worshippers of the family in question.

(e) Ancestral worship was a great incentive to respect, honour and honesty amongst the Ishans. The pivot around which the family unit revolved was the Omijiogbe or first son in its narrow respect. Everybody respected and did his duty to that person not only for fear of offending the spirits of the common ancestors, but tried to be in the favour of the person who held this important family position because sooner or later, he would have cause to seek aid at the ancestral shrine. That would bring him on his knees to his senior brother or Omijiogbe. Ishans



AN ANCESTRAL SHRINE AT EGUARE UGBOHA
The horizontal white elevation is the grave of the most recent ancestor.



HERO WORSHIP
A Worshipper hands over her offerings at the AGBA N'OJIE Shrine.

in those days had to be more accommodating of each other's short-comings because if one brother wronged the other and the wronged one took revenge instead of leaving the matter in the capable hands of the departed spirits, he had virtually exonerated the offending brother, and had by that act of revenge, heaped his and his brother's sins upon his own head: Vengeance was the departed spirits', as it were in those days!

In the same way the Okoven system brought people of two neighbouring villages to almost the same degree of relationship; they forbade the same things practically as they did for their own kith and kins. For fear of offending the god or oath which they took, they lived in peace, respected each other's rights, property, custom and laws. If one cheated a man from such a neighbouring village the consequences were as grave as those that would follow sins against one's blood.

Thus though people now realise that ancestral worship and juju beliefs are paganish, it must be admitted that they had their good part. Today with the growth of Christianity and other religions, which are ill-understood and many still practise with partial belief in juju, ancestral worship and our way of social life is being forgotten and relegated to the background. The family unit with its spiritual binding is disintegrating, Ishans are becoming more individualistic, the proverbial respect for parents, elders and family heads are disappearing, crimes like adultery, cheating etc. are certainly on the rise, the woman's fear and respect for her husband is almost a thing of the past, brotherly tolerance is as good as gone and everywhere, community bodies rise and break up in the absence of any traditional foundations. Many present day Court Members would admit that it was easier to get honest statements in courts or village councils when people still had beliefs in and fear of the lesser gods or jujus, which criminals believed were swifter more devilishly thorough than the Almighty Who was more loving, more painstaking and hence slower to pronounce judgment or inflict His just punishments.

Method of Worship:

Ancestral worship was universal in Ishan. Everybody had to worship the spirits of his departed parents, particularly, his father, at the very least, once a year. In reality the living appealed to God Almighty through the dead parents; they knew that they really had not the power of God or even of any god, but they believed that being in the other world where all inhabitants could see what went on here 'down-below', they could direct their offsprings they had left behind in this sinful and dangerous world. Secondly they believed all dead people could see and speak to God.

All children worshipped their father when dead, through the most senior brother who was the man's first surviving son. He had the custody of the family UKHURẸ, the short stick of about 2 feet in length with cowries tied round it, and representing the spirit of the dead father. The first son alone could touch this Ukhure and use it to bless the family as he had always watched his father do. Thus if any of his junior brothers or sisters had to appease the spirit of their dead father, they had to come to ask their senior brother or the eldest male child of the dead to perform the worship for them. The goat or fowl or whatever the native doctor had told them would turn their father's spirit to their direction, would be brought to the first son. He slaughtered the animal and the family or Uelen was called to witness the rite. Such members shared the food that was cooked for the occasion, and all blessed the person for whom the worship was done.

When the first son died, his own first son took up the custody of the

ancestral stick and now had to perform the rite not only for his own brothers but for his uncles and aunts if he succeeded to the Omijiogbe position of the family. Irrespective of his age and wealth he was acknowledged head of that family and was given the respect due to the custodian of the family shrine.

As I have said already in some places the custody of the family Ukhure did not pass from father to son but from the eldest male to the next.

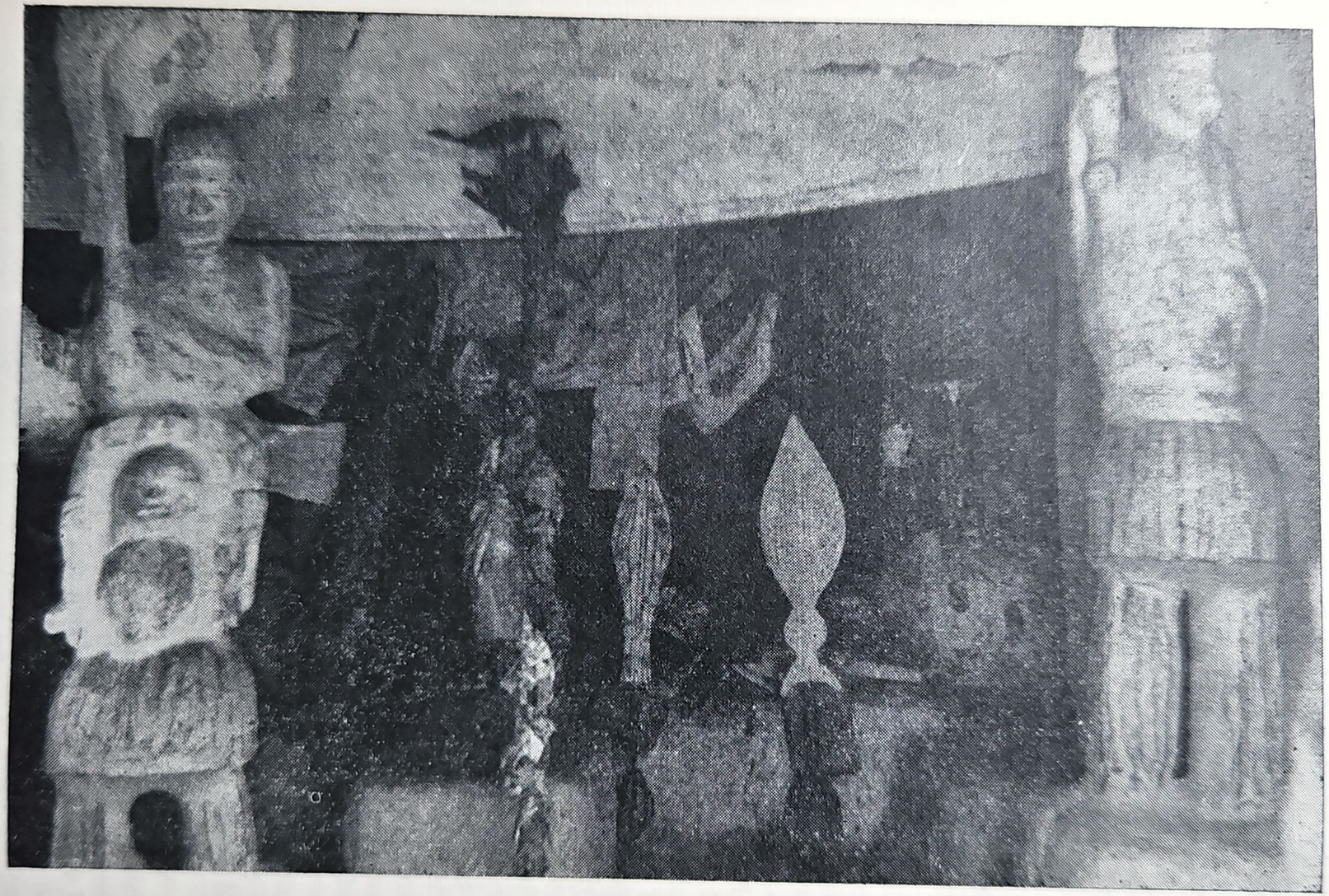
Our forefathers who started ancestral worship, as could be seen, were directed by the belief that dead people could see God face to face and also that they had the power of seeing and knowing what went on in the world they had left. This belief explained the reason for a man who had no children appealing to his dead father to help him get an issue: he knew his father could not create a child but by his supernatural sight in the great beyond, he might direct him to a wife who might be destined to bear him a son. At the end of the year when a man wanted to choose a site for the next farm, he worshipped at the ancestral shrine not because he believed his dead father could create bigger yams but all he was doing was asking the guiding spirit of his father to direct him to a place where he could farm in peace and prosperity. The actual power of making bigger yams and getting greater yield from the soil belonged to God Almighty. He knew that much. Thus basically the ancestral worshipper was trying TO REACH GOD in a dubious way which he thought in his ignorance, was straight: "if all dead men could see God, who else could be a greater intercessor than one's dead father?"

The pagan religion surrounding ancestral worship, therefore emanated not so much from the idea of interposing an intercessor between man and his Creator but from the way the worshipper invited the intercessor's attention! He believed nothing could more easily attract the spirits of our ancestors than fresh blood. They found GOAT BLOOD IRRESISTIBLE! Whatever changes a man wanted to effect in his family, he sought the sanction of his ancestors: once he spilt goat blood they were bound to listen whether he sought their attention, guarded by reason or in anger: thus to purify and forgive an adulterous woman, he slaughtered a goat at the ancestral shrine, to inherit a dead father's or senior brother's wife he needed to spill goat blood to be sure the ancestors bore him witness; to renounce a wife or to give her licence to seek issues outside, the ancestors demanded goat blood and to disinherit any of his children who was giving him grey hairs before his time, he was sure to claim his dead parents' attention and acquiescence by the provision of fresh goat blood! Their love for goat flesh and blood was such that there were very few demands a son could not get his dead ancestors to accede to!

Remove this sacrifice of a goat at the shrine where the dead ancestors were represented by a carved stick and we would have a simple man's concept of praying to God through intercession! That was the essence of ancestral worship!

(ii) Hero Worship :

The Ishans were great hero worshippers, particularly if that hero was a stranger! A man who led his people to victory in the ravaging inter-tribal wars, a man who sacrificed himself in order to save his village, a man who started a settlement or a man who performed great feats in his lifetime; all these usually at their death, were deified and became the common juju (ẸBỌ) of their respective communities. Each town of Ishan had its own great men who today are represented by shrines. But



HERO WORSHIP: THE AMESE SHRINE AT UNOGBO, IRRUA

At the entrance to the shrine are carved figures of EMUADA (State Sword Bearers) wearing the then common dress of UBUNUKU. The shrine, handed down from father to son, contains articles of all the ages since the deified Amese lived — his OSUNJOJO, Ada, Ebenlen, drums of various ages, cowries and as a sign of our times, old bicycle tyres! In another ten years if the shrine is not destroyed by civilization, we might find old Atomic Weapons! Joking aside, that is the importance of these shrines — these respected places where facts of history are deposited for the intelligent enquirer.

for these shrines the history of Ishan in another ten years could have passed into oblivion.

Examples? Igueben and Ugboha had ENỌWẸ, the great warrior; Uhiele Ekpoma had ẸRẸMẸINU—the man who built a house for his wife but had no roof over his own head! Ekpoma had UDA, the builder of the Second Dynasty of Ekpoma Royal Family. Irrua had AMESE, the cantankerous and devilish second son, who but for the tact and foresight of his father, ẸKPẸRẸIJIE, could have altered the history of Irrua, Uromi deified the warrior and self-sacrificing Onojie—AGBA. Uzea immortalized its founder, ASUKPODUDU, just as Ubiaja honoured their first ruler, ỌGHỌMIGHỌN, who prided himself in attempting the impossible: he lined up men from Ubiaja to Ilushi to bring him water from the Niger WITH A CUP; he had wanted to dress the trunk of a tall palm tree from the bottom to the top, with strings of the then prohibitively expensive CORAL BEADS—but he died before he got halfway! Ewohimi made a god of ALLAN, the first Onojie of ORIKHIMI, and ODU, the man who gave them water; Ewu swear on OKHIARANLẸN, the great warrior who died for his people while ẸIGBIDIỌMỌN was the honoured warrior who gave everything he had to uphold the prestige of Emu and, at his death, he was buried on the road for his spirit to continue defending his people he had been separated from.

These shrines are today the only reminder of illustrious Ishan men and women who lived and died for their towns or did things which brought honour and fame to the land of their birth. Similarly they tell the stories of the very first Onojie of each town and, in fact, all the leaders and their agents who were created Enijie by Ewuare the Selfish, were deified as exemplified by ẸKPẸRẸIJIE of Irrua, ICHESAN of Uromi, ỌGHỌMIGHỌN of Ubiaja, ỌNỌR of Ugboha, ALLAN of Ewohimi, UWAGBỌ of Emu etc.

(iii) Geography And The Gods :

The geography and environment also decided the types of gods people worshipped. Thus in Ishan, with no hills and stones, there were no gods of MOUNTAINS or ROCKS. Uromi, for instance, that had no water other than intermittent ponds, knew no River gods; the scarcity of water particularly on the plateau, gave extra importance to comparatively small sources of water. For example, Irrua had OBIEMEN — the goddess of the Lake; this, until the introduction of the OSENUWEGBE CULT, was a much dreaded juju. What was strictly forbidden for this goddess was sexual relations during daylight. Emu had, like Ohordua, ILAA, while Ugboha worshipped the goddess of OHA and Ewohimi paid yearly respects to ODU. Ewu had ỌMỌỌBỌ. As could be seen these districts that worshipped rivers are all outside the waterless plateau.

There were sporadic shrines of ONOKUN, the god of the sea. This was certainly not a 'native' god of an area where the largest expanse of water was the perennial POND! The cult of Onokun was confined to the women and was introduced from Benin. The emblems consisted of a mud altar attached to the front wall of a house, and on this were placed small pots, cowries, a piece of white cloth, pieces of chalk and the whole mud work was painted white. Once a while the women worshippers worked themselves into a frenzy and for a time, were quite irresponsible for their actions.

To introduce ONOKUN to a house, the applicant had to pay certain dues to the OHẸN ONOKUN (Priestess); these dues consisted of a white goat, a white fowl, a piece of white cloth, some white pots etc., all the articles being characterised by the colour, WHITE. The Ohen then

came to the compound and for FOURTEEN DAYS there was dancing and a general entertainment for the Ohen and her assistants. It was a most expensive business for the applicant not only initially but for as long as she owned an Onokun shrine: frequently the goddess through an oracle demanded a white cock for appeasement!

(iv) Iron Worship :

The god of Iron called IDIGUN was worshipped all round Ishan. The chief priest was the OGUN (Blacksmith). Oaths were frequently taken on it and was much dreaded since it was difficult for a man to go through the whole day without coming into contact with a metal article.

(v) Tree Worship :

Few trees had this honour in Ishan. The universally respected tree, though not a god, was the UKHIMIN (NEUBODIA leavis of the BIGNONACAE family). It was a symbolic tree said to be particularly blessed by OSENOBULUA. It was planted in the farm, as the care-taker of crops; then it went by the name of UTUN. It had to be planted in a new compound, and then it was known as IHIALOTỌ; planted in a line in front of the main house, it was called OGBIODIN, the protector of the compound and all it contained; planted at the intervillage boundary, it marked the ALU-OKOVẸN. ALU-ẸRẸLE, the site at which the jealousies of one's companions were warded off, was not a separate entity; the worship was usually done at the IHIALOTO of the compound, and all the women and children used this tree in common for this purpose.

The only other tree that was worshipped as a god was the UNOKO (IROKO). In a few places typified by Idunmebo, Irrua, it was the god of the whole village and its annual worship replaced the yearly feast of the community.

(vi) The Goddess of Earth :

If there had been a poor yield from the farms, money in Cowries was collected from the whole community, and if the ceremony involved the whole district under one Onojie, the collection was done by the IHAZA, for the purchase of the necessary things prescribed by the oracle for the appeasement of the goddess of EARTH. This type of worship meant to increase the next year's yield was performed strictly according to custom by the people of the first settlement of the district.

The goddess of EARTH was all powerful and hence was the simplest but most dreaded oath for any suspect to take. A small hole was made on the ground, some water poured into this and into it were dropped bits of kolanuts. The terms of the oath were recited and the accused picked up a piece of the nut which he ate. The psychological end of the oath taking being "MAY YOUR LIFE BE MISERABLE AT THE SIGHT OF THE EARTH!", the accused if guilty, could be imagined to be really a man afflicted by the pangs of his conscience, for there was nowhere he could go without seeing the earth: in his farm, on the road or in his house, he was in contact with the earth!

(vii) Osun :

This was the god of medicine and hence not all men had OSUN as a juju. This god was the embodiment of cunning, the art of healing, magic etc. It was worshipped after UBỌMI or consultation of the native doctor's oracle; he was worshipped with a he-goat, mashed yams with oil (AHA) and a piece of black cloth. Native doctors, medicine

men or people the native doctor had prepared an Osun pot for, worshipped this protective deity. In most cases it was handed down from father to son. The staff of this god was the OSUNJOJO.

(viii) Ojiuu :

Ujiuu was the king of death, and was not worshipped in Ishan but was much dreaded; he was not strictly a god but God's chief messenger for recalling men by death under such special speedy despatch as by thunder and lightning. The usual way God recalls men is by illness but where he wanted a man rather urgently he sent his chief—OJIUU—a more rapid killer than lightning or thunder cannot be imagined!

UKU AKPOLOKPOLO, AKENZUA II, OBA OF BENIN unveiling the statue of EMOTAN—who ought to be the Goddess of ISHANS—for but for her kindness there would have been no OBA EWUARE and NO EWUARE, NO ESAN!

PART TWO

SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND HISTORY

PART II

SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND HISTORY

CHAPTER XI

IT will serve a useful purpose to remember right at the onset that there are two parts to every Ishan district: the Royal Family and the common people. They were quite distinct, for nearly all the ancient Ruling Houses came from Benin City or its suburbs. The head of the Ruling House was and still is, the ONOJIE, who with his family, servants and brothers inhabited EGUARE, the administrative CAPITAL of the district. Another important thing an enquirer must take notice of is the use of the word BROTHER by us Ishans. It can mean anything from a male blood relation to a very good friend. Secondly "OBA'S SON" can mean a BINI and, in fact, it was until recently, a common thing for many Binis, once outside the City, to describe themselves as the OBA'S SON!

1. EKPOMA (Pop. 22,193)

1. HISTORY :

(1) Eguare (2,961):

This consists of
a. The Royal Family and the families that grew into quarters out of servants who traditionally lived in IKOKOGBE.
b. UKPUGHE which was founded by Isidaehomen, the second son of Udawe.
c. UWENLẸNAFUA, which was founded by AFUA, a junior brother of Udawe and second son of ỌDIA, and
d. UWẸNLẸN-OIBO which was the very first settlement of the Binis who deserted the City during Oba Ewuare the Selfish's reign. Their leader was Ijebomen; from here the Ruling Family moved to the present Eguare.

(2) Uhonmidumu (2,748) :

This is described as the very first settlement of Ekpoma and as a unit in Ekpoma, it consists of the following quarters:

(a) ẸGBẸ-IBHIUASE.
(b) ISIBHOHI.
(c) IDUMUOAKHẸN.
(d) ISIBHI-ENẸLO.
(e) ISIBHUA.
(f) IDUMUOGO.
(g) ISIBHELUA.

Ihonmidumu or Uhonmidumu is the centre for all major and serious meetings in Ekpoma and in the olden days when the INOTU assembled there, the exact spot being UGHE-ORIẸMUN, the matter for discussion was grave. With this traditional importance, it is necessary for one to go into the history carefully.

I have been given several reasons for why Ihonmidumu is so called

and why it is first in Ekpoma, Eguare taking precedence because it is the seat of government. Many elders maintain that Ihonmidumu became first after UDA had rewarded its founder, UASE for his sacrificial services. That would mean that before Uase there was no settlement in Ihonmidumu and since Uase was a servant to the Onojie in Eguare, Eguare in theory and practice, was senior to Ihonmidumu. But all elders are agreed that in theory, Eguare came after Ihonmidumu.

Some elders told me that Ihonmidumu came to be so called after the ORA Warrior, Idimu, was killed. The Ora people fought even more bravely to prevent the head of their leader falling into the hands of the enemy, but in the struggle, Ihonmidumu got the head (UHỌNMỌ) while the brave Ora fighters could only recover the valueless body. Where the head was finally buried came to be known as UHỌNMỌ-IDIMU. This story has not got us far as regards the history of the village. It only emphasises the fact that before this battle there was already a settlement at the present Ihonmidumu.

What then is the truth about this important village of Ekpoma? The truth is that as usual, the original or indigenous settlement is often overshadowed by the new-comers who were either superior in number, talent, might or hostility. Before Uase and before any other settlement in Ekpoma there was a primitive and humble settlement called OWẸN-ỌNA; the actual enlargement of this settlement came during the second dynasty of the Ekpoma Ruling House.

When Uda returned to resuscitate the extinct Ruling House round about 1485, he was so impressed with the selfless services of Uase, his grandfather's great servant that he decided to share all Ekpoma with him. Uda chose ẸGUARE, ẸNẸ, EMAUDO, while Uase chose OWẸN-ỌNA, IRUẸKPẸN, UJEMẸN, UHIẸLẸ and IGỌR. Uase, now a man of authority, withdrew from Eguare and went to settle at Owen-Ona. This great reward, merited only from utter disregard for his own personal feelings is expressed today in Ekpoma as "UASE NỌ GO OJIE TUẸ ẸKWẸA!" (He served his King up to the point of burning his male organ!)

Now here was a man second only to the ruler of the land—any wonder that he and his descendants soon imposed themselves upon the original settlers of Owen-Ona? Soon, Uase's family began to enlarge. He had the following sons, in order, ABIẸ, OGO, ỌMỌFUA, the founder of IKHIDEU, and a host of younger ones that had not separated from their father before he died. Isibhelua headed these younger ones. This name ISIBHELUA came to be the name of the original settlement of Uase and is today, the first quarter of Ihonmidumu. Ogo founded IDUMUOGO and Omofua's Ikhideu later migrated to Egoro.

Abie, Uase's heir, himself had the following children; ỌIDE, founder of IDUMUỌIDE, AMA, OAKHẸN, founder of IDUMUOAKHẸN, OSUMẸN and ODU. The quarter founded by this first son soon came to assume political importance in Ihonmidumu, and till this day when a new Onojie comes to the throne, he must come to Ihonmidumu for installation as the owner of not only Eguare, Ene and Emaudo but to assume ownership of the original Uase territory. Where he stays is at OHẸN ỌWIA, this Priest being the direct descendant of Abie.

Isibhi–Enelo:

A majority of the settlers were descendants of Enelo who hailed from IDUNEGBỌN in Benin City. These descendants were quite distinct in that they forbade carrying dead bodies, since according to

the old tradition anybody who had carried an IYIE-OBA (Oba's mother) never soiled his head carrying another dead body in his lifetime. The founder, Enelo, had had the dubious honour of carrying the dead body of an Iyie-Oba!

Isibhua And Isibhohi :

Once the great Uda was having his annual UJE at which several heads were to fall. One of those whose heads were destined to fall on that day was the wealthy but homeless IZANOGHA, who later passed into Ishan legendary because of his bravery and excellence in medicine and magic with which he mesmerised his opponents. When the executioners started at the head of the line of condemned men, Izanogha made up his mind that he still had many, many days to live and enjoy this world. While all eyes were fixed on the executioners as they danced themselves into a state of frenzy before dealing the fatal blows on their next victims, Izanogha made a bid for freedom; the power of his legs was his saviour! Rather than upset the whole ceremony for the sake of one escaped condemned man, a few chased him and as he disappeared round the corner, they gave up the chase. Reaching his house, he gathered up his family and fled. Somewhere in the jungle, his first son, UHI, remained behind and thus founded ISIBHOHI, one of the quarters of Ihonmidumu. The second son ISẸLUA, founded ISIBHUA. At Egoro area, another son called ẸBỌ founded UWẸLẸN-ẸBỌ. Another son called ABIA was the founder of a quarter in the present ABIA IRUEKPEN. Near the present Iruekpen market, brave Izanogha felt he had put sufficient thick impenetrable forest between himself and Uda, and so he settled down to found the first settlement of IDUMẸBỌ, Iruekpen. One of the children who followed him founded IDUMẸ-HỌNLẸN.

The only reminder of the original settlement founded and dominated by Uase and his descendants is that when ỌTỌ EKPOMA needs purification, people of OWEN-ONA in ISẸBHELUA, do the worship. This is in accordance with Ishan tradition — the first settlers in a new district were the worshippers of the Earth.

(3) Ujoelen (710) :

One of Oba Ozolua's daughters called UỌẸLẸN was so beautiful that all the great men of Benin fought to secure her hand in marriage; the battle was so much that the girl who combined beauty with wisdom, decided to shun the contestants with their wealth, and to spite them, she chose a nonentity as a husband. This was an unprecedented insult on such great Binis as the Iyasere, Ezomo, Uwague etc. To humiliate the princess they demanded the head of the innocent man. Uoelen fled with her Romeo, seeking safety in the jungle. They founded UJỌ-ẸLẸN, and they expressed thanks to God who delivered them safely to their hide-out by worshipping OJIEBIUDU, which actually was no juju but just an expression that they were then in existence by virtue of the Onojie who owned the land and on their own strength of evading the jealousies of powerful Benin Chiefs.

(4) Ukpenu (1,169):

Ukpẹnu Nẹ Ẹka was founded by ỌLỌWEMẸN, an Ekpoma Prince who lost the fight for succession. The rest of UKPẸNU descended in the main from Ihonmidumu.

(5) Uke and Idumebo were by and large, extensions from Ihonmidumu.

(6) Uhiele (3,868) :

This is the generic name for

(i) UKPOKE.
(ii) AKAHIA.
(iii) IDUMUEGAN.
(iv) EHANLEN.
and (v) ẸBHOAKHUALA.

(i) UKPOKE: OJỌLE was an Oba's son who committed a crime so grave that the Binis were after his life. He fled into the jungle and after many days of wandering, tired and worn out, he fell asleep under a tree. The unforgiving Binis who had been tracing his footprints located him in a thicket but before they could get to him, a cuckoo cooed near him thus waking him. Hearing the excited noise of men round him, he knew he had been caught by his fathers long punitive arm. Resistance was pointless and running impossible—so he went on his knees and begged for his life. His life was accordingly spared after his passionate pleadings, and in gratitude to this bird which is honoured by nearly all the Uhiele villages today, he settled in the place where he was found; this settlement became UKPOKE.

Ojole soon began to grow in importance and the Onojie hearing of him, sent for him to visit him and he would make him a chief. The proud Benin man felt his accepting a title from an Onojie *infra dig* particularly as he was an Oba's son, irrespective of the rumour that he left Benin City under a rather undignified haste. He therefore declined the offer and sent a servant instead. That servant was created EDOHEN who later founded AKAHIA, wedged between Ukpoke, Ehanlen and Eguare. Later he Ojole was made the ESON, quite fittingly as this gave him a position of a guardian to the Onojie.

(ii) IDUMUEGAN was founded by one of Uda's sons called Egan. He had fled to Eguare to escape punishment at the hands of his influential father.

(iii) EHANLẸN: Ojole had a very serviceable slave called ORẸNMẸNU who was so impressed with the thick grove of oil palms nearby, that he used to be a day or more away collecting palm nuts for his master. He was later given a little girl slave to bear him company as he used to be several days before he got back home. Soon nature had its way, and Orenmenu pregnated the girl in the bush during their off-duty hours. Fear made him keep away for quite a long time but later he saw the childishness in hiding so he came home to report his lapse to his master, Ojole, who was shocked and thoroughly angry at thoughtless Erenmenu going to foul such a virgin soil. He was however given the neccesary things to go and purify the grounds and the little girl was given him as a wife. Where they stayed in this palm grove became EHANLẸN from the purification of the soil (HAN LẸN — To purify). The wife was forever nagging at him that he brought her away from her home at Ukpoke where she was happy. To please her, harassed Erenmenu built her a house first, but whenever it was raining she drove out the poor man. To guide against this cruelty he decided to build himself a house but whenever he began work on it she would begin to sob that Erenmenu just wanted to add to her misery by leaving her alone in her house. The result was that Erenmenu succeeded in building a house for his wife but he had to live without a roof over his head!

Ehanlen soon grew into a large village but a large migration took place when Uda persistently raided the village for slaves. A large body of men in search of freedom founded EHANLẸN ONIHA in Ewu.

(iv) EBHOAKHUALA was founded by an ORA man called AKHUALA.

(7) Emaudo (1,232):

The first settlement here was the one founded by a Nupe called IDUBOR. Some warriors lumped together as 'Hausas' later stayed behind with him but most of these really were from the northern part of IFEKU (IHEKU) Island on the Niger. Many of the Emaudo quarters are quite distinct and have no blood relationship whatsoever. They form the same village just because of the nearness of the quarters. Thus marriage is possible amongst members of two adjacent houses.

Many of the early inhabitants left during the Eguare—Ikeakhe War of 1850. Some of these refugees founded IDUNWELE of Ewu and IDUMU-OLOGHO in Ubiaja.

(8) Igor (2,064):

This originally was a camp that grew into a village. The first and early settlers came from Uhiele, Ojieghudu in Benin Division, Ighanlan (Igalla) and Ora. Later settlers came from Urohi.

(9) Ene (2,241):

This large village consists of IMULE, UKHIODO, ẸBHỌRUA, UWENẸ, ẸKUNALẸN, IHỌNMIDUMU and ENỌNGBAN. Most of the early inhabitants were natives of IBHIARO in Kukuruku Division; IDUMUENIJELE of ENEARU was founded by people from ARUE, Uromi, while a part of Ukhiodo came from Idunwele of Ewu.

(10) Iruekpen (5,200):

This is a large district populated by very industrious, sly and gregarious people. It consists of

a. ABIA: A quarter which was founded by one of the great Izanogha's sons named ABIA.
b. IDUMU-ỌZA is where the Oniha of Ekpoma lives.
c. IDUMUAGBEDE: The blacksmith quarter.
d. IDUMU-EMALUA:
e. ẸBHOKPE: Which was founded by a Man of Benin extraction called OKPE.
f. OGBỌMỌN: Which in full is known as OGBỌMỌIDE.
g. IDUMUOGO:
h. UGHODIN:
i. IKHIN:
j. IDUMUEKE: Founded by another Benin man called EKE.
k. IDUMUEBO: Which was founded by Izanogha himself.
l. IDUMUEHONLEN was founded by one of Izanogha's children.

It is unsafe for anyone to be dogmatic about the origin of many of the quarters making up a place like Iruekpen because as a result of admixture of population, the different places lost their early distinctive affiliations. Many settlers came from Benin City and adjacent districts like EHOR, Ojieghedu etc. Traditionally the different quarters were grouped as follows:

i. Idumuogo and Idumuoza.
ii. Ughodin and Idumuemalua.
iii. Idumuebo, Abia and Idumuehonlen.
iv. Ogbomoide, Ebhokpe and Idumeke.
v. Ikhin which has some blood affinity with a quarter called IKHINERARA of Emaudo Ekpoma.

UJEMẸN is closely linked with Iruekpen and is closer to Idumebo, Abia and Idumuehonlen than to any of the other quarters.

2. Non-Aggression Pacts:

(i) There was a strong peaceful tie between Ekpoma, Opoji and Egoro. This tie followed the establishment of the Royal Houses of Egoro and Opoji, their first Enijie being the second and third sons of the great Uda, respectively. Since in those days the Onojie was law, any relation between him and a third party was binding on all his subjects; so the blood relationship existing between the Ruling Houses of Ekpoma, Egoro and Opoji was extended to mean that Ekpoma, Egoro and Opoji founders and people had the same descent.

(ii) Ekpon, Ogwa and Ujiogba with Ugun had strong peaceful connections resulting from the fact that Ogwa, Ekpon, Ujiogba and Ugun were partly founded by immigrants from Ekpoma, for example, Ekpon Royal Family hailed from Benin via Ekpoma. Ogwa Royal Family founder, Omi, came from Benin via Ekpoma. Ago Ola part of Ugun was founded by immigrants from Ekpoma and Idumu-Obo of Ujiogba was founded by Ikeakhe's junior maternal brother called IZẸGBO.

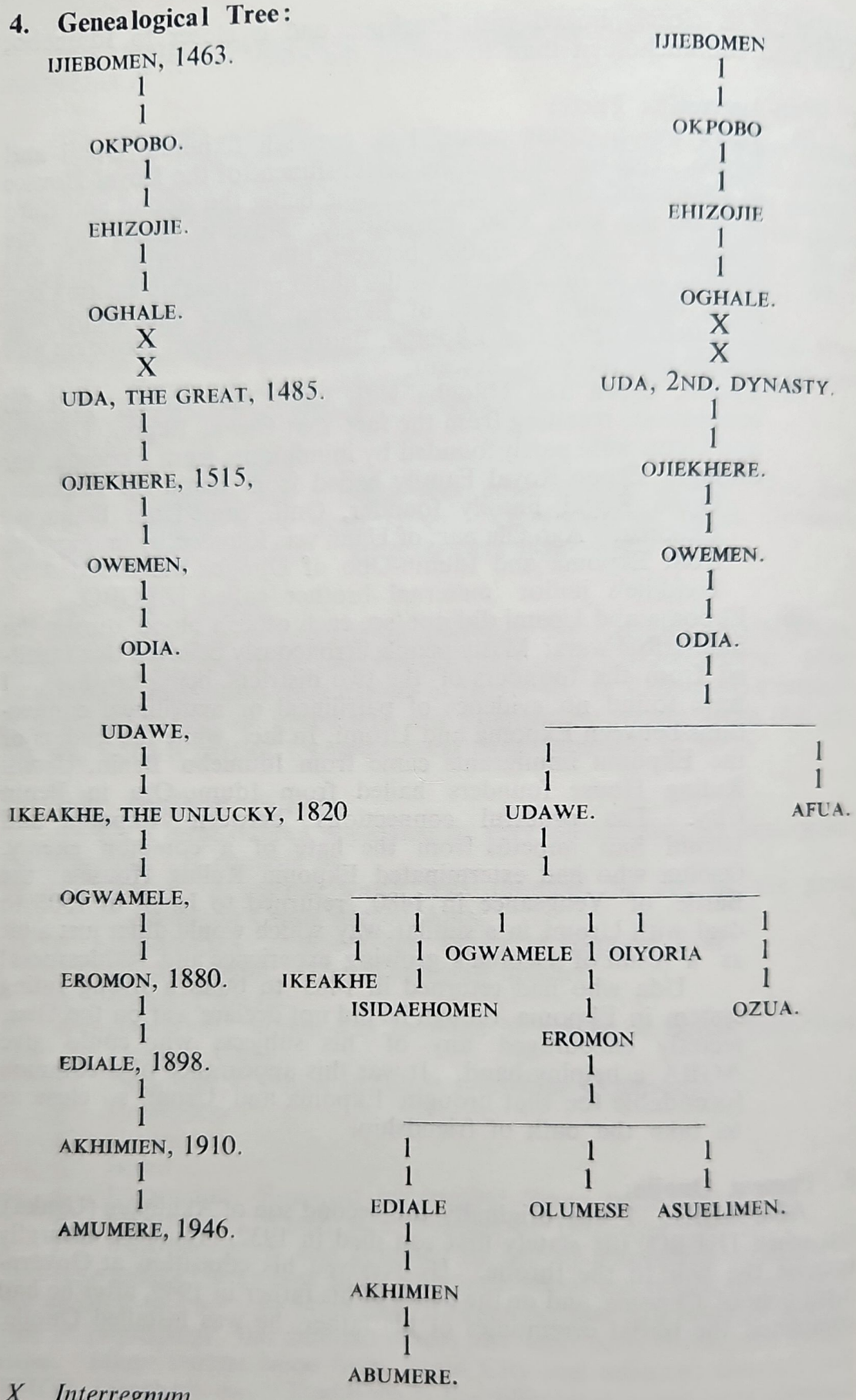
(iii) Ekpoma and Uromi did not 'see each other's blood' during the inter-tribal wars; Many people erroneously believed this resulted from the founders of the two districts being brothers. I have found no evidence of patrilineal or matrilineal connections between Ekpoma and Uromi. In fact, while the leaders of the Ekpoma immigrants came from Idumebo Benin, Uromi Ruling House founders hailed from Idumu-Oza in Benin City. The peaceful connections between Ekpoma and Uromi had impetus from the hate of a common enemy. Ozolua who had exterminated Ekpoma Ruling House at the Battle of Vengeance in 1480, returned to Ishan in 1503 to deal with Uromi in a similar way which would differ just a bit as a result of Ozolua's growing experience and ruthlessness!

Uda who had returned in 1485 to build a strong ruling system in Ekpoma, though he did not declare war on the Oba, secretly encouraged any of his subjects who could give AGBA a helping hand. It was this appearance of a common formidable foe that brought Ekpoma and Uromi so close as to take the oath of friendship.

3. Present Onojie:

ABUMẸRE I was originally the second son of Akhimien (Uzaka), but when IJIEBỌ, the stately first son died in 1932, Abumere naturally became the heir to the throne. He received his education at Government School, Ekpoma, and on the death of his father in 1946, after he had completed the burial ceremonies of his father, he was installed Onojie.

4. Genealogical Tree:



X Interregnum

5. Comments:

IJIEBOMEN, the leader of the Binis who came from IDUMEBO Quarter of the crumbling City, was the first Onojie of Ekpoma; he was one of the Ishan Leaders made the Oba's Representatives in the Esan Country, in 1463.

OKPOBO, Ijiebomen's successor, developed leprosy towards the latter part of his reign. People got so frightened of this disease which they knew first, had no cure, and secondly, was highly contagious, that they entirely deserted him. His brother who was to have succeeded him as he had no son of his own, made himself so scarce that but for Okpobo's Godson, EHIZOJIE, he could have suffered and died miserably; this godson took care of him and before the Onojie died he cursed his brother who was more interested in keeping his skin whole than fighting for the throne. Poor Okpobo invited the Egbele to witness his humiliations and finally adopted the godson. Thus when Okpobo died some years after, it was his godson that buried him to the great admiration and gratitude of the Eguare Egbele, but when the question of succession came up, the Kingmakers gasped! Ehizojie, of course, succeeded!

Ehizojie soon found himself surrounded by enemies and intrigues, so he very wisely packed bag and baggage away from Ijiebomen's Ijie to a site removed from his distractors. Thus the seat of the Ruling House passed from UWẸNLẸN-OIBO to the present Eguare, and up to today, a new Onojie had to go to Uwenlen-Oibo to be made Onojie, as a recognition of its being the ancestral site.

UDA THE GREAT (1485—1515) AND THE BATTLE OF VENGEANCE, 1480:

Round about 1480 OGHALE'S son went to Benin City to pay homage to the new Oba, on his father's behalf. As he was having a war dance and making a lot of show round the City, a man challenged him. The young Prince's pride being hurt he slaughtered the challenger there and then. Two things were unfortunate in this incident: first the man thus wantonly killed, turned out to be a son to the Oba, and secondly, the Oba happened to be OZOLUA whose chief desire even before he became Oba, was to have plenty of fighting.

Ozolua was not satisfied with an eye for an eye, he traced the executed man to his home, Ekpoma, and massacred not only the innocent Onojie, Oghale, but all his children. Some of the servants and a majority of Eguare fled to ENE; only one young man was saved in this expedition of vengeance and attrition. His name was UDA, a grandson of the Onojie, and whose mother was married to a man at Emaudo. Ozolua, a veritable fighter, saw something attracting in the young man, and having seen Eguare deserted, he took Uda captive to Benin.

Uda was given to a chief to look after. During the yearly wrestling festival, couragious Uda threw all who challenged him. At another meeting he killed all his opponents and this attracted him to the admiring Oba. Now a grown-up man, the Oba made enquiries about him and the guardian explained that Uda was not a native of Benin but the young man who was brought from Ekpoma during the Battle of Vengeance against the Onojie of Ekpoma. Oba Ozolua, always a lover of courage, was much impressed by Uda's exploits, and feeling sorry for the extinction of the Ruling House of Ekpoma, he sent Uda back to resuscitate the Royal Family of which he was a descendant. That was about 1485. Ozolua fitted brave Uda up like a duke, giving him men, property and money. Some well known warriors and medicine men were given him to see him safely installed as the ruler of Ekpoma. After a long triumphant journey, Uda and his men found their way to Eguare Ekpoma. The flute player who accompanied him later founded ẸGBẸ-EKWILẸ of Emaudo. Many of the men who followed Uda to Ishan became founders of now well known districts of Ishan when they had seen Uda well established as a monarch, and they themselves could not go back to the City.

During this unfortunate interregnum, UASE, Oghale's senior slave

gathered the dead Onojie's wives who had taken to the bush during blood thirsty Ozolua's massacre, built houses for them, and to be sure that he did not fall into temptations over his late lord's wives, he burned his male organ, and honestly took care of the women for 5 years. When Uda returned to begin the second dynasty of the Royal House and saw such faithful service to a dead master he was so moved that he rewarded this slave by sharing the whole of Ekpoma with him. Uda chose Eguare, Ene and Emaudo, while the ex-slave chose Ihonmidumu, Ujemirue (Iruekpen and Ujemen), Igor and Uhiele. This is the origin of the traditional method of sharing booties or labour in Ekpoma. Whatever there is to be divided, is first shared into two for Eguare, on behalf of Ene and Emaudo, to choose first, while Ihonmidumu takes the other part on behalf of the other villages of Ekpoma. For this purpose Uhiele and Igor may be grouped together as ẸMUHI.

From the above, Uda's greatness with a fitting deification throughout Ekpoma could be understood. Since according to Ishan tradition, OJIE KHẸ ẸBHO (The King is the Community), a man who resuscitated the Ruling Family of Ekpoma was as important as the very first Onojie. So deep was the gratitude of the people, and so powerful and glorious was Uda, that Ekpoma, like the rest of Ishans who always appreciated and recognized power, came to think of him as a god, and with that the name UDA crowded out not only the names of those that had ruled before him in the first dynasty but those that were his immediate successors. The result was that many of these names had been lost to history. Those of Odia and Udawe are remembered because of

(a) The great family ODIA gave rise to; for example, he was the father of the fabulous AFUA, founder of UWENLEN-AFUA and

(b) UDAWE, Odia's first son was the father of the famous SIX Princes of Ekpoma: IKEAKHẸ, ISIDAEHỌMẸN, ỌGWAMẸLE, ERỌMỌN, ỌIYỌRIA and ỌZUA. These SIX nearly changed the history of Ekpoma Uda had so bravely rebuilt.

6. Kingmakers:

Three quarters have hands in the selection, appointment and installation of ONOJIE in Ekpoma. These are UWENLEN-OIBO, UKPUGHE and UWẸNLẸN-AFUA. Uwenlen-afua is senior to Ukpughe in that AFUA the founder of Uwenlen-afua was the second son of Odia, while the founder of Ukpughe, ISIDAEHOMEN, was Udawe's second son. Thus Uwenlen-afua is an 'UNCLE' of Ukpughe. Isidaehomen, a handsome and influential Prince, went to live in the place that is today called Ukpughe and gradually all his grown up brothers ran to meet him and thus the tradition of all the male children living in this part of Eguare came about.

Now the succession strife Ekpoma had known in the past came about in this way: UDAWE had six sons—the famous six! On their father's death, the heir IKEAKHE the UNLUCKY (1820—1860) performed the necessary burial ceremonies but without OGBE before he became Onojie. He was famous for his wealth, renowned for his 140 wives (collected in a whirlwind attempt to get a son), but none could bear him one! He had only a daughter, IWAMỌN, who later followed one of the Nupe warriors who had come to help her unhappy father during the Eguare—Ikeakhe troubles of 1850. Under this pathetic circumstance, there was no point going into the expense of Ogbe since he had no male issue for whom to secure right of succession. Thus on his death, his next brother, Ogwamele (Isidaehomen had died) succeeded him according to Ishan native laws and custom. The only ceremony

Ikeakhe had not performed was Ogbe, which Udawe had performed for all his children. When Ogwamele himself died he too had not done Ogbe, and the right to succession passed to his brother, EROMON rather than to Ogwamele's son. This was how the succession according to BROTHER SENIORITY came to be superimposed upon the well known Ishan custom of FATHER TO SON, with the result that the awkward new custom wrecked peace and order in Ekpoma for nearly 80 years.

All these brothers were living in Ukpughe to where the late Isidaehomen's influence had drawn them. Thus each new successor had to be brought from Ukpughe. They knew the brothers and their exact seniority and hence were better placed to BRING THE NEXT MAN. In this way grew the custom of the Elders of Ukpughe being responsible for the actual SELECTION of a successor. APPOINTMENT was jointly the prerogative of UWENLEN-AFUA and Ukpughe, while INSTALLATION wa the right of the elders of Uwelen-Oibo.

According to the system which had come about by Ikeakhe not having an heir and like his successor, Ogwamele, failing to perform the important Ogbe, after Eromon, the next Onojie should have been the 5th of Udawe's sons—OIYORIA. OZUA, the youngest of the brothers was afflicted by two maladies—insatiable cunning and a deep hatred for his brother, Oiyoria. If there was anything he hated in his life, it was to see this object of his hate on the throne—at least not in his lifetime! So he used all his cunning to ensure that Oiyoria never came near the throne—at least, not before him, Ozua. He went up to Eromon who was then reigning as Onojie, and advised him to perform the Ogbe ceremony, extolling all the manly reputation attached to that ceremony, but carefully making no reference to the momentous succession alterations it would lead up to.

In good faith Eromon accordingly performed Ogbe. But Oiyoria predeceased Eromon, so that on Eromon's death the next brother to succeed him should have been OZUA! But Eromon, by performing Ogbe had claimed all rights to inheritance and succession for his own line. Ozua was caught by his own trap! He put up a stiff fight arguing that right from Ikeakhe's time succession had become established on BROTHER SENIORITY and not by heredity. Of course the elders of Ukpughe and Uwenlen-afua told him he was talking nonsense and that the right to succession had passed indisputably to Eromon's first son, EDIALE. By his cunning Ozua roused a few elders to his favour and a civil war broke out. Ediale was driven from the palace and traditionally, fled to ENE. Ozua, installed himself Onojie, blessed by practically all Ekpoma, but the Kingmakers led by the late ABHULIMEN, maintained that native laws and custom must be respected, and that Ozua's boomerang had rebounded on him. Ediale went to Benin to put his case before Oba OVONRAMWEN. The Oba sent peacemakers headed by Obahiagbon, in 1895. On reaching Ekpoma, the missioners took so much bribe and so indiscriminately, including Obahiagbon's marriage from the two factions, that the only decision possible under such heavily greased palms, was to declare them both Onojie, telling the Oba that the trouble in Ekpoma was a question of RIGHT versus RIGHT. So Ediale was made Onojie with headquarters at IBHADEGBELOBHO'S place in Ukpughe, while Ozua ruled at UWẸNKPỌLỌMỌN! This corrupt decision made matters worse but Ovonramwen soon faced his own troubles and Ekpoma left in turmoil for the next three years. By then, the Oba had been deported and in 1898, a European Officer was sent to put Ekpoma in order. He heard the case between Ediale and Ozua at Iruekpen and ruled that native laws and custom must prevail:

since Ediale's father had performed all the important burial and Ogbe ceremonies, Ozua had lost all right to succession. That was the end of a man caught in the whirlwind his cunning had set up in an attempt to destroy his own brother.

Ekpoma's trouble did not end here. Since they followed Ishan Laws and custom perfunctorily and stuck to no tradition, as it were, there was bound to be succession strife, the ember of which was constantly fanned by bat-like manoeuvres of some of the kingmakers. Ediale who suffered so much before he got his right, died, again without performing Ogbe. His brothers ỌLUMẸSE and ABHULIMẸN were both eligible in so much as their father, Eromon had performed the ceremony for them all. Olumese, who was then Eromon's eldest surviving son, claimed the title. He was solidly supported by Ukpughe and Uwenlen-afua who were actually responsible for selection and appointment of a successor for Uwenlen-oibo to instal. But Ediale's first son, Akhimien was backed by his late father's wealthy and influential Chief Steward, ỌSIN. He sought the aid of the then powerful and vocal Onojie of Irrua (AKPA-KPA) and the great IMADOJIEMU of Opoji. These two Enijie reduced the dispute simply: "It was whether Ekpoma was Ishan or not Ishan!" They found that as long as Ekpoma followed the method of BROTHER SUCCESSION there was bound to be continuous and devastating troubles and this would go on from generation to generation until Ekpoma Kingmakers adopted the laws and custom known in Ishan all over: SUCCESSION BY THE FIRST SON AFTER DULY PERFORMING THE BURIAL CEREMONIES OF HIS FATHER.

Olumese therefore stepped down after three months on the throne as a result of the Enijie's ruling, and ever since, when an Onojie died his heir buried him and succeeded to the title in accordance with LAW 4. That finally settled the perennial chieftaincy disputes in Ekpoma and a slump followed the trade on pretenders to the throne of Ekpoma!

Either because her people have always been the calculating, suspicious and revengeful type, or because of the BROTHER SENIORITY type of succession Ikeakhe the Unlucky's heirless death had initiated, Ekpoma had never really suffered the misfortune of having an autocrat on their throne. Those with deep respects of the constitution and traditions and people who were otherwise carefree formed the community that tended to have a despot as a ruler. A man who knew the throne was not his by right or birth, that is he could not only say "Since my father was the Onojie and I am his lawful first son, the throne must be mine and mine alone," would infinitely be more careful of his actions. For a long time in Ekpoma, between Ikeakhe the Unlucky and Akhimien (about 90 years) there were several pretenders to the throne. Anybody chosen then knew his own children had only a remote claim to the throne, and that he himself was there by the grace of God and the mercy of his people; in other words he had no pretension at DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS: he must rule with an eye constantly to what his people thought of him.

In the history of the Ruling Family few names stuck. Uda, of course, formed a class by himself; he resuscitated the house Ozolua had raised to the ground, even though he was really an ỌMỌKWIAN to Eguare. Today many names still remind us of him: ỤDÀWE, UDAZẸ̀LE, UDABỌ, IVBI-UDA etc. Ikeakhe's name was another commonly mentioned for two reasons: First he led a most pathetic life; he was fabulously wealthy but he died without an heir. The only daughter he had had, was seduced by IMỌGODIA and ADAUDO, two of the Nupe warriors he had invited to help him punish Eguare for their mental torture crowned with their driving him to Ene and later to his mother's

place, Ihonmidumu. In addition, because he had no issue from his 140 wives he led the meekest of lives. He suffered abuses and indignity—his frequent ejaculation was, "Ekpoma is ill-treating me because I have no child." In great contrast was his uncle, Afua. Afua was the typically proud and rather vindictive Ekpoma man. He once sent to poor Ikeakhe to ask him if he knew how an Onojie without children was buried. Ikeakhe meekly sent back that he did not know. Afua sent back the same messenger to tell the unhappy man that an Onojie without an heir was buried with a young virgin and a youth in place of the customary 15 women and 15 men who were beheaded to escort the dead king who had an heir, to the great world beyond. Such a king was placed in a grave lined with living slaves and each arm rested on a living man's body. Then the grave was covered. If later the grave caved in, another man had to be used to refill it. But poor Ikeakhe who had no possibility of having an heir before he died must know that all he would be entitled to would be a virgin and a youth—in other words, he would receive the pauper's burial!

The second reason for Ikeakhe's name standing out in the history of Ekpoma was as a result of his having no heir and hence he failed to perform Ogbe; he thus nearly altered the constitution of Ekpoma and certainly altered the direct line of succession. As we have seen already the right to succession which went from father to first son, went from brother to brother with all the disruptive strifes that attended such a clumsy method of inheritance. With Ikeakhe went peace in Ekpoma until the time of Akhimien.

7. Method of Installation:

All the princes lived in Ukpughe so that as soon as an Onojie died, it was Ukpughe who selected the new successor. This was the late Onojie's first son, before and after the Ikeakhe episode. This man was put forward by Ukpughe and approved by Uwenlen-afua. He went over to the Palace and took possession. As usual with Ishan laws and custom burial had to be begun at once. In most part of Ishan the ceremonies of burial and Ogbe having been merged, the new man then performed the Funeral Obsequies to satisfy his Egbele which consisted of Ukpughe, Uwenlen-afua and Uwenlen-oibo. Having completed these ceremonies he now performed the IRUẸN (Clothing ceremony) if he had not already done it. He was then followed by all the Egbele to Uwenlen-oibo for the installation. This tradition had its origin from the time Ehizojie moved to the present Eguare.

At Uwenlen-oibo the new man was made first to realise the joy and dignity of labour before pleasure: he swept the street, then climbed a palm tree. He then gave the elders a slave since replaced with money since the abolition, before he knelt on a special Installation Stone (UDO ỌLOJIE) with each hand resting on UJE, about 18,667 Cowries. The actual ceremony of blessing was performed by the Odionwele of Uwenlen-oibo. Then the Onojie-elect returned to Eguare in jubilation. At the inner chamber of the palace, ancestral worship was performed by the Osukhure before the Uwenlen-oibo Odionwele and the Oniha counted him on the OJIUKHUO, with "ỌKPA, Eva up to Ugbọlọọ" (one, two up to eleven), making him take his seat on the eleventh count. They then blessed him with UKHATỌ UKPẸELE, ALE RẸNỌMỌN (Long may you reign and may you be succeeded by your son). They then stepped back and gave him the Onojie salute of DO ỌMỌN! Everybody then came forward to pay him homage. Then the new Onojie stepped out to the public grand throne where members of the public came to pay their respects.

CHAPTER XII

EGORO (Pop. 2,586)

I History:

The correct name is EGHOLO.

In collecting material for this work one of the things that struck me again and again, was the readiness with which some people could build up a story to suit a name, particularly when that name was derogatory and the informant was a non-native of the place. Outside Egoro a few respectable men told me with infinite relish, that the founders of Egoro where slaves being hawked about. The great Uda of Ekpoma bought them and gave them a place to live. In support of this story they reminded me of the meaning of the Ishan word, EGORO, from the word EGHOLO (To sell or to hawk). The story is plausible but far from the facts.

In 1485, the great Uda returning from Benin, was accompanied by followers, many of whom were trusted medicine men, warriors or body-guards, some were admirers and many were servants and slaves. Two of the followers, proficient in medicine and famous for their courage, were OMI, founder of OGWA, and ỌWELE, founder of Egholo. Owele himself was a native of IDUMEBO in Benin City. He and his immediate family founded Egholo round about 1490. This settlement grew fast to form a large village. Partly to satisfy his precocious and wealthy second son called ALALA, and partly to prevent future headaches for his heir, OJIEIKHERE, from his two younger brothers, ALALA and OJIENỌDIAESAN, Uda moved Alala to Egoro to be the ruler of Owele's settlement. That was about 20 years after the resuscitation of the Ekpoma Ruling House, and about 10 years before Uda's death.

While Owele was the founder of the settlement he was himself not an Onojie. The first Onojie was ALALA UDA. The present Onojie of Egoro, OGBẸBỌ (MOMO), while not disputing that the first Onojie was Uda's second son, insists that he was not born in Ekpoma, but that the three brothers, Ojieikhere, Alala and Ojienodiaesan were already born at Benin before the arrival of Uda. This, to me, is just splitting hairs. Furthermore this argument does not help the present trend of disowning old blood relations, particularly when that relative has been overshadowing the other for years. Whether Alala and Ojienodiaesan were born here or in Benin, the fact remains that the three Ruling Houses of Ekpoma, Egoro and Opoji were Uda descendants with Ekpoma of course, being the senior. Until the advent of the whiteman, this close blood relationship was maintained at the ceremony of ỌRỌ yearly festival. While the hearts of animals slaughtered at ALU-UDA were given to the first son of the Onojie of Ekpoma, the heart of the cow killed at ALU-IJESAN was given to the Onojie of Egoro. During this worship the Enijie of Egoro and Opoji brought kolanuts which were used in order of their seniority—Egoro then Opoji.

Secondly the name EGHOLO came about from the origin and habits of the founder, Owele who as a medicine man from Benin spent much time making herbs and worshipping gods he created. Worship in Ishan is UGHOLOMI. OGHOLO is singular (he is worshipping), while EGHOLO is plural for THEY ARE WORSHIPPING.

Today the population of Egholo is small, so alarming has been the decline in population that Onojie Asuegbehien made the law supported by slaughtering a goat at the common ancestral shrine, that inhabitants of Eguare could intermarry. This depopulation of an area inhabited

by prolific people was brought about by mass emigration following revolts against autocracy, civil wars and a desire to live a life of one's choice. As a result of these Egoro people were scattered all over the district: today they are to be found in UJIELU of Ewossa, IDUMU-EGORO of Agadaga, IZUMẸN in Ewohimi, EGORO near Obadan in Benin, EGORO in Ebhoran and across the map with the whole breadth of Ekpoma between, is EGORO-NA-ỌKA.

The following villages constitute modern Egoro:

1. EGUARE:

The original settlement of Owele is today marked by IDUMUGHE-KPE. The change from Idum ighekpe to the present Eguare took place after the death of the unlucky OSAWELE, an only son who died without an heir himself. Towards the latter part of his reign, Osawele developed leprosy with the result that all his subjects deserted him. Fortunately he had a godson, who regardless of his own person, did everything to make his godfather's last days less miserable. When he died, this godson performed the burial ceremonies, and according to Ishan laws and custom, succeeded as Onojie. He then brought all the paraphernalia of office to his own quarter in the present Eguare.

2. EGORO-AMẸDẸ:

This consists of IDUMU-IYASELE, IKIDO, IGHOIDOGUN and IBHIONIHA. The first settlement was founded by one of Owele's sons. He was made ONIHA and here has remained the seat of the Oniha ever since. The Iyasele lives in the Idumu-Iyasele part. Some of the early inhabitants of Amede were OBONOBHOKHAN and IKHA-TẸNMẸN:

3. ỌRAẸDẸ:

This place was founded by some of Owele's followers and hence are the same as Eguare in custom.

4. IKHIDEU:

This was founded by Omofua, the third son of Oghale's famous servant, Uase. From Ihonmidumu Ekpoma, Ikhideu migrated to Egoro. The UWENLEN-ỌBO part was founded by a Native Doctor from IRUEKPEN.

5. EGORO-NA-OKA:

Was founded by a group of Egoro-Amede people headed by Ikhatenmen who could never see eye to eye with the then Onojie of Egoro. Though the Onojie was unable to crush him, his life was made so uncomfortable that he fled south to ỌKA jungle. Nostalgically he kept up regular communications with his home, keeping the usual worship and all cultural practices with the people they had left behind. This trait has kept this colony in the jungle intact for the Onojie of Egoro, onto this date. When Ikhatenmen fled Egoro, he and his followers first settled on the Ekpoma side of Urohi area. Constant friction with Ekpoma people and their Onojie made them shift further into the jungle.

II. Kingmakers:

Members of ẸGBẸLE-IBHIERAMẸN of Eguare form the Kingmakers.

III. Installation:

Until after the burial ceremonies of the late Onojie, the Oniha acted in all matters. The actual installation was performed by the Odionwele

of IKIDO in Egoro-Amede and the Odionwele of IDUMUGHEKPE. To the latter the heir sent a piece of a white cloth and a he-goat which was slaughtered at EDION-UGHELE of the old Eguare. This done, the two Edionwele came for the installation at ODUGHA after the blessing at the ancestral shrine by the Osukhure who lived in IKOKOGBE. Ikido's importance in installation ceremonies dated from the origin of the village which migrated from Eguare. They are up till now responsible for the burial rites of the Onojie.

IV. Present Onojie:

Is OGBẸBỌ but became MOMO when he was converted to the Mohammedan Faith. He had worked abroad as a Warder, coming home in 1935 on the death of his father ASUEGBEHIẸN. He was installed Onojie after performing the burial ceremonies with Ogbe. Egoro has benefitted much from his intelligence and a broader outlook. Helped by the peace that came to Egoro after he became Onojie, he has brought dignity and almost complete independence to the town which until 1935 was more correctly a vassal of Ekpoma.

V. Genealogical Tree:

Ọwele arrived Ekpoma with UDA 1485.

OJIEIKHERE (Ekpoma) — OJIENỌDIAESAN (Opoji)

ALALA, 1505.

OSAWELE.

OMI

IZUAGBO.

OJIEMẸN.

OJIEKỌ.

ODẸKHIAN, 1866.

ỌMỌIGBERALE (Epileptic) — UDUGBILI, 1884. — ỌKAISABỌ, 1886. — OKOISẸ, 1906-1911.

ASUEGBEIHIẸN, 1911.

OGBẸBỌ (MOMO), 1935.

VI. Comments:

From the time Uda's son ALALA became Onojie of ỌWELE'S original settlement, up to the time of ODẸKHIAN there had been no record of succession strife. There were two reasons for the scourge that ravaged Egoro after Odekhian's death. The first was unfortunate and the second was the direct influence from external sources; this second reason enhanced the consequences of the first.

ODẸKHIAN (1866—1884), had many sons. On his death in 1884, ỌMỌIGBERALE the first son and an epileptic was so handicapped by his disgraceful affliction that he shunned all public appearances: he could never tell when the next seizure would come with all its humiliating after-effects. Thus no one was surprised and the Egbele was much relieved when he was unable to perform the burial ceremonies of his father. The second son, UDUGBILI thereupon performed these vital ceremonies. Knowing the consequences of these ceremonies, ỌKAISABỌ (ỌKAN) who was the fourth son, protested vehemently arguing that since Omoigberale was not dead or so incapacitated as not to know what he did, or that what he was doing was wrong, he should be assisted to perform these ceremonies and thus keep what was his divine right. The great question was one of native laws and custom: "Can one perform these vital functions for another?" In answering this important question the Egbele was divided, as usual, because of ad hoc interpretations to suit their candidate. To add to their confusion, the impasse created by poor Ikeakhe's colourless life at Ekpoma which had a rather over-riding influence on Opoji and Egoro, gave many elders sharp points with which they poked holes into Ishan Laws and custom, irrespective of the fact that unfortunate circumstances led Ekpoma Ruling House into its then unenviable plight. Quoting from Ekpoma history these elders concluded that if Omoigberale could not perform the burial ceremonies the next brother, Udugbili should do so, since it would have been his turn after his senior brother, anyway!

With the Egbele divided amongst themselves, the way was open for civil war; this was so devastating that both claimants fled Eguare: Udugbili to Iruekpen and Okaisabo, to first ORAEDE and later to OKE in Benin district—two foolish goats each wanting to cross the bridge first until no one could! Then death struck, bringing momentary peace to Egoro. Udugbili, overcome by anxiety, died and the kingmakers sent for Okaisabo (OKAN) who then performed the burial ceremonies before ascending the throne in 1886.

In 1903, death that had brought peace seventeen years ago, struck again at the Royal family, this time it had a civil war in its wake! Okan died and OKOISE, Odekhian's eleventh son and now the most senior surviving son, reared up his head, on the ground that since Odekhian their father had performed Burial and Ogbe ceremonies on behalf of all his children, he and not ASUEGBEIHIEN, Okan's heir, was the rightful claimant to the title. Of course he had Ekpoma to quote profusely! Asuegbeihien (IHIẸN), stood solidly on native laws and custom contending that what obtained at that time in Ekpoma was a by-product of omissions! Since he had performed the burial ceremonies of his father both his property and title were his. In 1904 the matter came up at the Native Court in UROMI and the finding was in favour of Okoise. Unsatisfied Ihien fought relentlessly. He went up to AGBEDE in 1906 to put his case before Mr. Crewe Reade, the then District Commissioner. Mr. Reade was not the type of man to stand arguments; he declared Ihien an enemy of peace in Egoro, tried him and found him guilty. He asked him to stop fighting for the title or go to gaol. Hard boiled Asuegbeihien preferred the latter and so Crewe Reade sentenced him to a year's imprisonment. He was sent to Benin, the only place there was a prison then. After six months of languish, Ihien was unrepentant, maintaining that the Egoro Onojie title was his and no one else's. He was released and he returned home to give Okoise the works! What happened in Ekpoma after Ediale became Onojie was no longer helpful

to those who allowed Ekpoma politics to influence their judgment. Ediale who had suffered similar troubles was openly in favour of Okan's heir.

THE IRRUA — EKPOMA SKIRMISH, 1908:

Reading the handwriting on the wall Okoise sought more powerful allies. He went to Irrua and pledged his Egoro to Eromosele the Great of Irrua. Eromosele, who till his dying day maintained that the white man at Ubiaja only had a nuisance value, took a personal interest in the matter. Followed by about 100 armed men and the best singers in his harem, and on horse back himself, he decided to go and see his new domain. Unabashed and with a fanfare he went through Eguare Ekpoma. After he had passed the more vocal members of Eguare assembled and harassed Ediale as to why he allowed this discourteous behaviour which was not only on himself but on all Ekpoma. Poor Ediale who only overcame his own troubles, and then not quite fully, ten years previously, would rather let sleeping dogs lie, but his more truculent brothers under the leadership of Asuelimen were disposed otherwise. On the third day, heralded by trumpeters and drummers, Eromosele's approach on his way home was quick to bring all the he-men of Ekpoma out to challenge his passage. When the party had got into Eguare street, Asuelimen wanted to know from one of Eromosele's men why they had to treat Ekpoma in the way they did. For an answer the man dealt proud Asuelimen a slap; that was enough for the people of Eguare and a fight broke out. The great Eromosele mustering as much dignity as was possible under the circumstance, took shelter at Mr. Ihaza's house situated in the present Court premises. But for the darkness and the prompt action of the District Commissioner at Ubiaja, inter-district war could have resulted; in the affray IHẸN-RU, the bride Okoise had given Eromosele when leaving Egoro, was seized at Ekpoma and one more slave was freed!

In 1911 Okoise died and Asuegbeihien came on his own. A year previously Ediale of Ekpoma had died and his son, Akhimien known to some as Uzaka, succeeded him despite the protest of "Brother Succession" protagonists. That was much in favour of Ihien and when he died in 1935, his son Ogbebo had little difficulty in overpowering AGIDIGBI, an Uncle who wanted to repeat the whole disgraceful strife again.

CHAPTER XIII

OPOJI (Pop. 3,915)

1. HISTORY:

The correct name is UKPOZI.

After the battle of vengeance fought by war-happy Oba Ozolua in 1480, the throne of Ekpoma was vacant until the triumphant return of valiant Uda five years after. Uda had three sons that came into the picture. The first was the quiet and diminutive OJIEIKHERE. The second was ALALA and the third was power-drunk OJIENODIAESAN. The second and third had become so wealthy and influential that it was no surprise to anybody when, like the prodigal son, they informed their father that Eguare Ekpoma could no longer contain them and so, wanted territories of their own! Alala was made the duke of Owele's settlement and Ojienodiaesan, the ruler of UKPOZI. It is quite incorrect to say that it was the first son that became the ruler of Egoro. Those who propound this fallacy do so on the grounds that the Onojie of Egoro traditionally ate the hearts of animals killed by the Onojie of Ekpoma. Indisputably when the three Enijie of Ekpoma, Egoro and Opoji had something to share the order of seniority, maintained at the pains of punishment from the departed ancestors, was: EKPOMA, EGORO and OPOJI taking what was left. If it was the first son that went to become Onojie of Egoro, tradition-loving Ishans could have made Egoro always choose things before Ekpoma. The custom of giving the heart at ALU-IJESAN to Egoro came from what obtained when Uda's heir, Ojieikhere, had just become Onojie and yet had no son of his own. As could have been seen under the Laws of inheritance, it was Ishan custom even to adopt a brother for the purpose of any of the ceremonies for which male children were a desideratum. While at Alu-Ijesan, which is the generic name for the shrine common to all the Enijie who had reigned in that particular district, the Onojie of Ekpoma thought of himself as the FATHER taking the Enijie of Egoro and Opoji as his first and second sons respectively. At ALU-UDA, where he dealt directly with his own line (second dynasty), the hearts of animals slaughtered were the sole possession of the Onojie of Ekpoma's own heir.

It would be ridiculous and illogical to think of an Onojie allowing his heir to go and settle in another district, thus laying his house open to future feuds. This conception is in agreement with the present day order amongst the descendants of UDA — Ekpoma is first, Egoro second and Opoji, third.

When the third son, Ojienodiaesan demanded a world where he could be master of all he surveyed, Uda said, WẸ DI BHỌ ỌNU UKPỌLE NIA (You stay at that end), and that gave name to his settlement, UKPOZI. That was about 1505.

There are six main quarters in Opoji:

(i) EGUARE (923):

This was the place founded by OJIENODIAESAN in 1505. This association is still discernable amongst the descendants of Uda—IBHI-UDA—who are to be found today in the Royal Houses of Ekpoma, Egoro, Opoji, in Ogwa and Ujiogba.

(ii) ỌGHAGBO (447):

The founders came from Ehanlen in Ekpoma and still perform the traditional ceremonies in common.

(iii) Iki (816):

This was founded by immigrants under the leadership of USIAMẸN; these people came from IRUEKPEN. Till this day, Iki people fix the date of their yearly feast of INOKHIO after Iruekpen had performed their ỌWA.

Iki people were first in the present site of EGUARE, IRRUA. The large body of disciplined immigrants from Benin in 1460 were so proud, domineering and so war-like that the people they found were wise to seek peace further into the jungle—to the present settlement of Iki. The more stubborn ones refused to bulge and even to this day, are still waiting for the return of their men who had gone off, hence their name—IDUNEKHAKPOZI (IDUMU NE KHẸ UKPOZI or the Quarter waiting the return of Opoji!), and despite years of trembling before the acquisitive might of Irrua, have by a miracle of equilibrium, remained a distinct entity.

Iki people, particularly the quarter of Usiamen, were the executioners of Opoji.

(iv) Ujọsanlen (579):

This village was founded by a great Benin warrior called UZAGBOMI who was later deified and to this day is worshipped at the village's yearly feast known by this name. The chief priest of the shrine holds the title of EZOMO of Opoji.

(v) Okhore (625):

Originally to prevent undue jealousy and the friction between brothers the princes were sent away from Eguare on the death of their father; the place they lived was IDUMOHẸN. This quarter gradually enlarged to form the village of OKHORE. This law was later abrogated by AKHIBI THE VALIANT, who felt the heir was in the name of security, left isolated and lonely by his brothers.

(vi) Iki-Ẹwanlen (389):

This village was founded by ẸWANLẸN who advised Opoji warriors during the great and protracted IRRUA—OPOJI War.

THE IRRUA—OPOJI WAR: 1845—1850:

There were series of inter-clanish clashes, culminating in this most protracted war. In fact as far back as 1463, the large body of conceited immigrants who arrived Irrua were not satisfied with dominating the humble folks they met. They treated them like slaves or bush-men and were overtly out to eliminate them one by one. For years the aborigines bore the crushing treatment the Benin immigrants meted out to them, but they finally had to quit, leaving their land and homes for their war-like new-comers. They escaped with what they could, into the jungle and settled in the present Iki area. That they had grabbed the land of the people they found, did not satisfy these greedy strangers. They sought the fugitives out and continued to harrass them from Irrua for years on end.

At long last the fugitives decided to fight back and soon they raised a splendid body of warriors under indomitable leaders whose names have been engraved in the history of Opoji: these were AKPOKHIO, ỌNU-GBENUGBE and OHIABHIDALE, all avid war-mongers themselves. Under their leadership the erstwhile fugitives began to lead retaliatory sorties to Irrua, and this very much angered OGBEIDE the Terrible, who had just come to the throne of Irrua. Ogbeide wanted their heads! He used one of their friends in Irrua to trick them into one house where they were trapped and rounded up. As a respecter of bravery Ogbeide staged a trial for the three arch-enemies of Irrua. Apart from the insignificant fact that he was both the prosecutor and judge, Ogbeide gave

them one of the fairest trials he had ever conducted. Said the Terror of Irrua: "And you, Ohiabhidale, you are accused of using your flute to say that nothing would please you more than seeing Ogbeide's head on your floor—truth or lie?" The fearless warrior answered that he had thought it would be good service to all Ishan to sever Ogbeide's head from his body! That was enough for the Prosecutor cum Judge. "Guilty!" and that rhymed with the third of three heads on the floor!

When the news of the betrayal of Ukpozi's honoured warriors got to their people, it did not require the usual war drums to work Opoji men into the required state of frenzy. The Ishans did not have the stupid self-deceit of formal declaration of war—telling your enemy that as from such and such a day, you will attempt to kill him at sight! Thus in the case of Opoji and Ogbeide, for the next five years right from the time they learnt of Ogbeide's atrocities, heads fell indiscriminately on both sides, except that of Ogbeide. The nearest thing Ukpozi saw to that was on one occasion when Ogbeide was tricked by the sight of a deer in the day-time and right in the street of his Eguare. He wanted the head of this daring animal and while he chased it down Eguare, Ukpozi warriors surrounded his palace, set it ablaze and while the terrified members sought safety in the nearby bush, they fell into the scotching embrace of Ukpozi head hunters! When Ogbeide returned and saw so many headless members of his family he demanded an Ukpozi head from every adult male in Irrua! More massacre, this time, at Iki!

That was how blood flowed between Ukpozi and Irrua until about 1850 when a man advised the people of Iki on how to exterminate the rather hungry people of Irrua. A bunch of fully ripe and succulent palm nuts was the bait: as Irrua people came to pick the irresistible fruits, they were dropped one by one with a chopper! Heads! They were enough to end an almost 400 years of blood-shed!

The strategist of that last encounter that made Irrua learn to live in peace with their neighbour was the founder of IKI-EWANLEN!

(vii) ẸKHU (136):

This place was founded by ILOLO who was the son of the Oba then ruling in Benin. He was banished by his father for his cantankerous nature. He wandered with his family through the jungle until he got to a spot where the expensive necklace on his wife broke and got scattered in the bush. The whole party stopped at once and began searching for the beads. They searched high and low and by the evening they had cleared an area large enough to take two villages, Benin style! Still the main part of the necklace was nowhere to be found. In the evening they camped for the night—that camp led to EKHU! After a few days Ilolo scouted the area around to have his bearing, and then he came upon a settlement, where the Ruler of Opoji was. Introductions were made, personal histories exchanged and the Onojie welcomed his stay near him. Until the coming of the white man the descendants of Ekhu paid their yearly tribute and homage to the Oba direct to Benin.

2. Non-Aggression Pacts:

Opoji's greatest enemy from history was Irrua and her best friends and relatives were Ekpoma, Egoro, Uromi and Ogwa. Thus while Opoji spilt Irrua blood with infinite relish, custom forbade her "seeing the blood" of anybody from Ekpoma, Egoro, Ogwa and Uromi. Ogwa of course, was related to Ekpoma which was the main tie. Uromi and Opoji were not at all related by blood; the only connection I have found between Opoji and Uromi was the marriage of ỌZEDU, the daughter of Ediale, Onojie of Uromi. This Princess was the mother of ỌMỌ-

KHOA who later became Onojie of Opoji, round about the same time as Ogbeide of Irrua and Akhilomen of Uromi. As seen already good relationship between the Enijie of two districts meant good neighbour relationship between the people. Thus the close tie brought about by the marriage of an Uromi Princess to the Onojie of Opoji became so strong as to merit a non-aggression pact.

3. Present Onojie:

Is OKOSUN II. He was PIUS USIANẸNẸ as a Prince, who was born on the 22nd of December, 1912. He had his education at the Government Schools, Irrua, Opoji, Uromi, Sabongidda and Ekpoma, finishing at the RCM School, Warri. He became a Christian in 1930, and in January 1934 he entered the Regional Catholic Seminary, Asaba — but so violent was the parents' and Opoji public reaction, that a year after, the community that insisted that what they wanted on their throne was an Onojie and not a pope, won! The young Prince then left Asaba and entered the world to seek a living. Always proud of making a living from honest labour, no job was menial to him. From the lowest labourer he worked his way up to a Storekeeper under the John Holts at Katerege in the Northern Provinces. In 1949 he resigned and came home to carry on business on Rubber and Timber. On his father's death on the 21st of October, 1952, he began the burial ceremonies at once and at the end he was installed Onojie in November of the same year.

Under Okosun II community development projects, some started during his father's lifetime, have progressed apace. With the general political awakening, the town is infinitely more difficult to govern than it was during his august grandfather's time. He is now President Grade B Customary Court Ishan West.

4. Kingmakers:

The Elders of two quarters of Eguare — UWẸNLẸN-UDA and IDIDIGBA, form the kingmakers of Opoji. While Uwenlen-uda consists of the descendants of OJIENODIAESAN, Ididigba was founded by the second son of Onojie IDIGBA, so that it is really an off-shoot of the Ruling Family, and since it descended from a male member, it, according to Ishan Laws and Custom, qualifies for all lawful activities of the family stem.

5. Installation:

As soon as the Onojie died, the two kingmakers' quarters assembled at the palace. They were responsible for the washing, dressing and ceremonial interment of the dead monarch. In the olden days these duties were rewarded by the heir with a present of a male and a female slaves to the two quarters. The Onojie must be buried in the traditional grounds, the IWẸHE—just behind the palace.

After this the heir must begin the burial ceremonies at once completing the vital parts within seven days. Then he was ready for installation. This ceremony, at which the Odionwele of all Eguare and the most elderly man of Uwenlen-uda counted the heir on the Ojiukho, making him take his seat at the eleventh count, was preceded by blessings (ILUỌBO) at the ancestral shrine by the Osukhure who is found in UWẸN-UJE Quarter. The Iluọbo took place at ALU-IJESAN and ALU-UDA.

It is interesting to mention the post-burial but pre-installation ordeal (the last in his life) that the heir had to undergo. In Opoji custom the Onojie's children did not perform the IRUEN until after the death of their father. So before the installation ceremonies the heir performed

this Clothing Ceremony, proceeded to clear the farm path, swept and watched the village main square as an Egbunughele, climbed a palm tree and on coming down, someone challenged him to a wrestling match — the last insult of his life!

6. **Genealogical Tree:**

The great UDA of Ekpoma, 1485.

OJIEIKHERE (Ekpoma)

ALALA (Egoro)

OJIENỌDIAESAN, 1505.

IDIGBA.

EKHINẸ.

ANỌMẸGUALE.

ANOA.

OLOKHIMI AMẸMẸ.

ỌBO.

AKHIBI The Valiant, 1749.

ỌMỌRẸMẸN.

IKHINA N'OJIE.

UABỌMẸN.

ỌMỌKHOA, 1835.

ỌKHIHAN, 1864.

IMADOJIEMU The GREAT, 1909.

OKOSUN I, 1946.

OKOSUN II, 1952.

7. **Comments:**

(a) AKHIBI THE VALIANT; 1749: Akhibi was a left-handed warrior who felt that being an Onojie should not make a woman of a he-man, which every inch, he was. He knew no fear with the result that his followers, wanting to please him, were suicidal in their disregard for personal safety. He was a great magician and people used to explain away his success where nobody else could have hoped for a draw, with the belief that he had supernatural powers. This avid interest in magic and a dauntless spirit made his fame spread far from Opoji.

Round about 1751, when the insulted OBI of OBOLO-UKU (Ubulu-Uku) murdered the lovely ADESUA, daughter of the Ezomo of Uzebu in Benin City, Akhibi was one of the Ishan Enijie invited

by Oba AKENGBUDA to lead in the series of military operations which culminated in destroying the impenetrable defences of the Obi. When all the invaders got confused by the innumerable roads supposedly leading to the inaccessible palace of the proud Obi, it was thought that Obolo-Uku's famous strength in magic needed an equally great magician to break. Akhibi combined the refined thinking of the magician with the desire of a warrior to excel where others failed: the Obi's head was brought to the Oba in Benin!

Akhibi made use of his strong power of observation and though he went to Obolo-Uku for war, he took notice of all he saw in that land of beautiful singers and dancers. Thus all the drums for the various War Dance in Opoji today were copied from Obolo-Uku.

As a reward for his services Akengbuda got the images of himself and Akhibi cast in brass; Akhibi also brought the trumpet called OKOLO AKENGBUDA from Benin after this Obolo-Uku War, but unfortunately both the brass images and the Okolo have been allowed to rust in the ancestral shrine at Opoji, and in another five years, all that had remained to speak of the great past of this valiant son of Opoji will vanish!

Akhibi was famous for several other reasons in Opoji history. He was not the Onojie who would ask a subject to render a service he knew he could perform and perhaps, better. On one occasion after he had returned in triumph from the Obolo War, he was leading a war dance during the annual Opoji feast when jealous enemies from Irrua ambushed him and shot him with a poisoned arrow. The arrow landed on the big toe of one foot, and as quickly as lightning he dealt a destructive blow with his flashing magician's hand: the toe with the poisoned arrow was neatly cut off with a dexterous swing of the Eben in his hand! Ignoring the bleeding toe, he the Onojie, gave the author of the poisoned arrow a determined chase, threw conventions to the winds, caught up with the assailant and severed his head from his body! Hence the expression which got into Ishan saying—AKHIBI N'OJIE UKPOZI, ỌGBO OBỌ RA IGENE FIỌMA! (Akhibi the Onojie, he side-tracked his strong men and beheaded a man himself!)

(b) OMOKHOA ruled as Onojie about the same time as Ogbeide of Irrua, Akhilomen of Uromi, Ogwamele of Ekpoma, Agboga of Ubiaja, Aigbe of Ewohimi etc. He was a grandson of Ediale, Onojie of Uromi.

(c) OKHIHAN 1864—1909: Okhihan typified the Enijie of Opoji but he surpassed all others in their usual longevity. Although he did not die until 1909, by 1897 when Oba Ovonramwen was humiliated by the white man, Okhihan had become so senile that he was more in touch with the spirits of his ancestors than with the mortals whose destiny he presided over. Wisely, his audacious but wise eldest son took over from him and Okhihan saw him firmly in control of Opoji before he died.

Okhihan, like the Enijie of his time, could not be anything but a despot; his capacity for sheer wickedness got to such a stage that Opoji felt they had had enough of him. They rebelled against him and in the civil war that ensued he took refuge, first in IDUMU-ẸKHU in Ekpoma and later, in IDUMỌBO (EBUDIN). He later made peace with his subjects but by that time he had spent 21 years in exile! When he got back he was not himself again, for his claws had been blunted by age. Indeed by the time he died, he had lost practically everything—sans teeth, sans eyes, a veritable dummy on the throne!

(d) THE GREAT IMADOJIEMU 1909—1946: As only death can remove a man once he had been duly installed Onojie, the aged Okhihan in 1897, was advised to let his son and heir, the vivacious and sensible IMADOJIEMU, deputise for him at all public functions and meetings.

In 1900, he it was who was actually in command of Opoji, his father being alive only by his quavering voice. Having heard of the fate of the all powerful Ovonramwen at the hands of the white man, he had the sense to realise first, that resistance to the white man who arrived Ishan in 1900, was useless and secondly, running only reduced what bargaining chances he had with these clever strangers. He received the District Commissioner from Benin with mustered friendliness and that created an indelible impression. Ishan Native Law or not, the white men had their own methods of grading and recognition of warranted chiefs. Imadojiemu, the friendly chieftain, got his warrant sooner than any other chief in Ishan; that was in the same year, 1900. By the time his father Okhihan died in 1909, he had got used to wielding authority as Onojie, limited only by the anti-slavery laws which was all the white men could do in those difficult days, when they were handicapped by ignorance of the country and its people, the certain outcome of the Mosquito sting and the fewness of their number.

Imadojiemu's advice was sought on practically everything that affected Ishan: Ogbidi, for instance, was returned to Uromi in 1901 through Opoji. Imadojiemu became the most powerful Onojie amongst the IBHI-UDA Rulers. Ekpoma, not to talk of Egoro, became a mere vassal of Opoji, for he had been made the District Head of Ekpoma! People began thinking and actually believed that Akhimien was a minor with the great Imadojiemu wielding the great big stick of a Regent. This got to a stage when agitation for home rule began in Ekpoma. By 1930 to 1934, it had almost got to a stage of overt hostility between the people of Ekpoma and Opoji on the one hand, and on the other, between Akhimien and his subjects who felt their Onojie was bringing Ekpoma under the humiliating heel of Opoji by his meekness. Ekpoma and Egoro fought together and before Imadojiemu died in 1946, both places had become distinct from Opoji.

The great Imadojiemu of Opoji, in his lifetime raised the name of Opoji and made it equivalent to any of the originally well known Esan Towns. Thus in the renowned but dreaded ALL-ISHAN COUNCIL of 1920, he was a member like Eromosele of Irrua, Uwagbale of Uromi, Okojie of Ugboha, Ifebho of Ewohimi, Oribhabo of Ohordua, Ojealekhe of Emu and Agbebaku of Ora.

He kept up the hereditary longevity of Opoji Enijie, dying after 37 years on the throne or 40 years as a ruler of Opoji, at about the age of 95 years.

CHAPTER XIV

IRRUA (Pop. 21,382)

1. History:

The correct name is URUWA. It came to have this name on the arrival of the Ruling House. Before this time there were primitive settlements at AKHO and the place today called IDUNEKHAKPOZI. The proud assertive immigrants from Benin settled in Eguare close to the people they found. The domineering attitude of these strangers coupled with the inherent desire to please the new-comers on the part of the aboriginal settlers made these first settlers move forward to Opoji, leaving a handful of the more virile and stubborn type which is still represented today by Idunekhakpozi.

Where did the founders of the present Ruling House come from? I have found several conflicting answers from our elders who tried to convince me. Some and this constituted the majority, said that the first Onojie was a man called AMILẸLẸ, a chieftain or warrior from IFEKU ISLAND on the Niger. On his way from Benin where he had gone to pay homage to OBA OHẸN who gave him his first daughter, IRIOWA, in marriage, he espied extraordinarily large bunch of oil palm nuts. Concluding that a land rich enough to produce such wonderful nuts must be very fertile, he decided to settle on the spot which he named after his wife IRIOWA. The story went on to say that Amilele later went to help the Oba during the famous Akure War and from there his people brought the Guinea Worm to Ishan. Another set of elders told me that Iriowa was the Oba's eldest daughter married to one Iyasere who settled in Irrua after fighting the Kukuruku War. Others qualified this story by saying that Iriowa could not go on because she was pregnant and her time was at hand.

I have been unable, after a prolong research, to get confirmation to these two stories. Holes could easily be picked into the pattern of the first story by anybody who knows Benin history. Amilele, a warrior from Ifeku, went to pay his respects to Oba Ohen who ascended the Benin Throne about 1330. The same Amilele later went to assist the Oba during the Akure War which was fought in 1818. That would mean that this warrior lived for over 500 years! A less forceful argument against this first story is the doubtful nature of an Oba giving his FIRST DAUGHTER to a stranger outside Benin City — however influential or helpful to that Oba. Regarding the second story, I searched hard for an Iyasere of Benin who went to war with his wife, an Oba's FIRST DAUGHTER at that, and refused to return to Benin but decided to stay in Ishan. If even there was such a woman or Oba's daughter as Iriowa, why should she have followed the husband to a dangerous war? If she was pregnant, the more reason why she should have stayed behind in Benin. Above all the Kukuruku War was a comparatively recent affair of 1850, fought long after Irrua had become a well known district under the grinding heel of Ogbeide the Terrible! Also Oba Ewuare the Selfish who died about 1473, had travelled during his appeasement moves to Irrua which was already well known by that name; here he met and snatched the best magician Irrua had—OGẠN—now deified in ẸKHUAE in Benin. His follower's head with the unmistakable Ishan facial marks can be seen at the Museum in Benin today.

What then is the truth about the origin of Irrua? No one today can dogmatically say what the truth is. From my research both here and in Benin City, I found that the nearest thing to the TRUTH is

that there was no daughter of an Oba by name of IRIOWA given out to a visiting warrior as a wife. True, Amilele headed the founders of Irrua but he was not from Ifeku. Ifeku Island was uninhabited before the Idah War of 1515—1516. When the boatless Benin drive was halted by the Niger, they camped on this side of the River and the known nearness of such enemies at Idah's gate made life unbearable. The more easily disheartened ones began to flee from the besieged town. Many of these refugees founded the first settlements on the Ifeku Island. That was some 53 years after Irrua had its first Onojie! The southern part of the Island which is Ishan was founded between 1894 and 1907!

Decidedly there were primitive settlements as I have mentioned already, existing in present day Irrua, before the time of Ewuare the Selfish. Actual mass exodus of Binis followed his inhuman mourning laws round about 1460. A majority of these, fleeing from autocracy and injustice in a disciplined body, found their way to Ishan and the very first batch, mostly from UGBỌKA in Benin City, under the leadership of Amilele, settled in Irrua. Helped by their number, their oneness and their domineering spirit, they soon ousted or eclipsed the simple inhabitants they had found. Oba Ewuare, after being repeatedly beaten in attempts to get the recalcitrant subjects to return to Benin, tried body tattooing to make identification of deserters easy; that did not help, as, very soon, everybody in Ishan began tattooing his body in an inferiority complexed attempt to be like the superior immigrants. Ewuare then tried diplomatic peaceful methods: he declared a general amnesty followed by begging the leaders (EKAKULO) to return with promises of big rewards. The people, who now had begun to enjoy positions of autonomy and loyalty from their followers, sent back to the Oba with IRIOWA, IIDE-E! (We have found a home and we are satisfied with where we are!). That was the word that led in later years to IRIUWA, and much later to URUWA which had its final metamorphosis when the white men dealt it a final blow, reducing it to IRRUA!

Oba Ewuare finding there was no way to get these people to return, decided to make friends of them at least, and at best, friendly subjects. In 1463 he invited all the leaders to Benin and formally installed them Enijie (Dukes), the paramount rulers of their subjects, owing allegiance only to the Oba himself. Ewuare beat them in that the hitherto rebellious subjects did not realise that by accepting these titles from the Oba the recipients were admitting inferiority and the suzerainty of the donor!

Thus the Irrua Ruling Family came directly from Benin. Members of this family and their slaves formed EGUARE (pop. 1525).

(2) Akho (606):

The early founders came from IBIE. They were the first settlers in Irrua. Next came USENU but after the battle for IDIGBA, as a mark of honour for Usenu's heroism, the latter was given official recognition as first, second only to Eguare. The hereditary chief of Akho is UWAGUE who traditionally acts for the Onojie during the interregnum between the death and succession of an Onojie in Irrua. This custom had its origin from the first Uwague who was an erring first son of the Onojie but was banished to Akho which was then separated from Eguare by an almost inpenetrable forest. The wife and Throne Trappings which he collects when he steps down for the new Onojie till this day remind people that but for the sins of his ancestor against his father the Onojie, he should have been the Onojie.

(3) Usenu (176):

The founders hailed from USELU in Benin.

(4) Idumebo (743):

The IDUNEGBON Quarter came from OBEIDU, Uromi. A majority of the rest came from IHEBHE (ISEVBE).

(5) IDUMABI (447):

The founders came from UJAGBEN and UROHI.

(6) USUGBENU (2611):

This is the second largest single unit in Irrua. A good number of the early founders came from Benin. It consists of

(a) IKEKIYALA.

(b) UHAEKPEN whose first settlers originated from UHAẸKPẸN in Benin City.

(c) UGHENỌKHUA a majority of the first inhabitants came from IGHANLAN (Igalla).

(d) UZEBU founders came from Uzebu in Benin.

(e) IDIDIGBA was founded by Princes — sons of the Enijie between IKHIHIBHOJERE The LAW-MAKER and OGBEIDE The TERRIBLE. Until the time of Eromosele the Great who had only a few brothers, all Princes had to go to Ididigba on the death of their father.

The UWẸNLẸN-ẸDO part of Ididigba was founded by some Binis.

(f) EMANOGHO was an extension of Uwenlen-Edo.

(7) EIDENU (1474):

This place was founded by three great warriors called UNOBI, AIGHẸ and ỌMỌRUARE. Omoruare was one of the fugitives that fled Emaudo same time as the people of Idunwele Ewu, and hence UDOWO and UWẸNLẸN-ILẸ of Idunwele have the same origin. As a result of Emaudo, which was founded by the Nupes, being the source of origin of Omoruare, many people in Eidenu talk of their ancestral home as being the Ifeku Island. The original settlement of Unobi became IDUNOBI, that of Aighe became EIDENU-NA-ATO while that of Omoruare grew into the present UDOWO. All the three warriors were deified and are worshipped during the yearly festival of Eidenu.

The worshipper of OTO in Irrua is in IDUMU-OGBẸBỌ of OGBAKHA, Udowo. This prerogative was actually Akho's but Ogbebo, the Omijiogbe in charge, ran away from Akho during Ogbeide the Terrible's reign to an Arebhoa he was in love with. After he left Akho Okpeaifo was deputizing from Akho Village for him. The Omojiogbe of Ogbebo family today is UGHULU.

(8) AGWA (515):

Although many elders in Agwa maintain Agwa was founded by an erring OBA'S SON who was banished but given the OBIẸMẸN juju for protection I have found no corroborative evidence for this story, but quarter by quarter, Agwa which came from the Ishan word OGWA (Mixture), consists of:

(a) IDUMUEGUALE which was founded by immigrants from Ugboha under the leadership of IHIẸNLỌNMỌN.

(b) IDUMUABỌKHA which was founded by refugees that left Emaudo Ekpoma same time as Idunwele Ewu.

(c) ẸGBELUALELOMON which was founded by immigrants from UJAMẸN in Benin Division.

And what a mixture — Ugboha, Emaudo Ekpoma and Ujamen Benin!

(9) UNEA (5127):

This is the generic name for the virile group of people who inhabit IBORE, ATUAGBO and UGBALO. It was founded by UNEA, a grandson of ASUKPODUDU of Uzea. He was one of the immigrants who deserted ỌTUA after a misunderstanding between the Egbonughele age grade and the elders who made unreasonable demands during their group Iruen ceremony. The embittered age grade left Otua on protest

and scattered all around. Unea and his immediate family actually searching for his kith and kins in Uzea, got to Akho where they stayed.

The custom of the newcomers was so vastly different from that of those they had found, that each step they took was a mistake in the eyes of those who gave them sanctuary. The last straw came when they insisted on going to pay their respects to the Onojie with any animal killed. In Ishan custom, animals like the Tiger, Bush-cow, Pig, Rhinoceros and Eagle must be reported killed by the hunter, and a leg (except in the case of the Tiger when all the carcass had to be sent) must be sent to the Onojie. Taught by the tyranny of their ruler at Otua, Unea people went with war dance to the Onojie if they killed a snake or even found Partridge eggs, to the utter astonishment of the Uwague under whom they were then living at Akho, and to the disgust of the Onojie they had gone to serve. On one occasion one amongst them killed a Tiger (Leopard really) which rightly they ceremoniously carried to the Onojie. They were given the traditional reward and were advised to bury the King of Animals according to Ishan custom but they insisted on eating the flesh. This was too much for the Onojie, who fearing one of these days these strange people might perpetrate a forbidden Ishan act, asked them to withdraw from near Eguare. So they went to settle at a spot which was first called AFE-OKHUARIA, but later assuming the name of the progenitor — UNEA. This was about 1846 during the beginning of Ogbeide the Terrible's reign.

Unea had three sons, IBHOLE, AGBO and IGBALO in that order of seniority. These children founded Ibore, Atuagbo and Ugbalo which together make Unea Group today. One of the followers of Unea founded OBIABI.

The quarter in Ibore called UGBEGUN is the remainder of the migration of Ugbegun people who, leaving Iruekpen and IDUMUKHUA of Ekpoma, first settled in Irrua only to be kept moving by the war-like nature of Irrua people. Some of them fled to Ibore and founded this quarter which still traces its relatives to UMẸLẸN in Ugbegun.

(10) UNOGBO (389):

Most of the common people of Unogbo came from OHẸ or UHẸ in Benin, via Eguare Irrua. Ekpereijie, the first Onojie of Irrua had two sons of note. The first was ETAGHAIFI who later succeeded him. The second son AMESE (from OMESE, a devilish son), was really the very devil incarnate; outside he was a terror, and at home, he made the Onojie, his father, curse the day he was born. He was the living embodiment of anything ugly and evil. He was as slippery as fish and certainly drank like one. Since he took no notice of the existence of his father, the Onojie, Ekpereijie was sure anarchy would follow his death, so he decided to take precautions in favour of his dutiful first son, Etaghaifi. He called Amese and told him he wanted to create him a Duke with a territory of his own with no interference from mere mortals like himself let alone, his senior brother. This very much pleased Amese, who was duly given the Swords of Office, ADA and ẸBẸLẸN, loaded with riches and slaves and given a site where he settled far from Eguare. That site today is UNOGBO and the direct descendant of that terror of a Prince, today, is Chief ATIVIE, the present OHẸN AMESE; Amese had to be deified not because of the good he did in his lifetime but in appreciation of his timely death which gave his senior brother a breathing space. The blood association is still in evidence today in that wherever the Onojie goes he must take the Ohen Amese as his right-hand man.

After the death and deification of Amese people came to respect him as much as they dreaded him when he was alive. Many people,

particularly Princes within and without IRRUA came to worship him. He became the god of storm that wrecked indiscriminately not only his enemies but houses and farms of innocent people alike.

THE POSITION OF OHEN AMESE IN IRRUA AND ISHAN:

After the deification of Amese, the god of Stormy Weather, his heir became his chief priest — Ohen Amese — a title which has been handed down from father to son. When an Ohen dies, his first son performs the burial ceremonies at the end of which, he is ready for the title and inheritance of his father's property. All the edion of Unogbo assemble and the Ukhure Amese (the wooden representation of the original Amese) is counted in the hands of the new successor. While any of the Ọhen's children and all male members of the Amese family can touch this Ukhure, the heir must never touch it until his father's death and until he had performed the burial ceremonies.

OHEN AMESE'S ROLE BEFORE INSTALLATION IN IRRUA:

To become a lawful Onojie in Irrua the new man must go through the vital burial ceremonies which alone entitles him to the family property and title of Onojie. Towards the end of these ceremonies in the olden days, the heir had to come to Unogbo for blessings at the Amese Shrine in the bush. For this, ground chalk and salt with cowries and kolanuts were used by the Ohen Amese. The seven slaves for the burial ceremonies were brought before the Ohen and in turn, were told what message they should convey to the spirits of the FOURTEEN DEAD ENIJIE: Sample: "A new man is succeeding them; they should make his way straight in this world and drive off untimely death for him." The slave nodded that he understood what message he had to carry to the next world. Then his head was touched with UKẸBỌ, the symbol of Amese, followed immediately by a stroke with the Ebelen which beheaded the slave. The seven slaves were so sent on different errands to the departed spirits. This done, the heir in gratitude, gave a cow, a goat and cowries to the Ohen Amese and proceeded to the final ceremony that confirmed his claim on the throne: OGBE.

Some time before the actual date of this final ceremony the heir sent two of his wives with two bales of cotton to the OJIE Ohen, the other name for Ohen Amese, and the two women within three months spurn the thread for the AGBỌ Cloth to be used on the Ogbe day. On the appointed day the heir came to Unogbo bringing along two slaves, male and female. The Ohen Amese chose one of the slaves whose life was then spared to sweep round the Amese Shrine for the rest of his or her life. All Unogbo followed the heir and the Ohen to the outer shrine with IKHIO (War Dance) and at the shrine the condemned slave was beheaded to complete the Ogbe ceremony and thus ended the strenuous and expensive but vital pre-installation and pre-inheritance duties of a successor. He was then after, master of all in the palace.

It is therefore obvious that for successful completion of these important ceremonies the Ojie-Ohen Amese had a leading role in Irrua, a fact which mis-directed investigating Officers nearly used in the early thirties to bring the Ohen Amese head-on against the then Ojirrua, Momodu.

11. UJABHOLE (1199):

The founders were immigrants from UHẸ in Benin. They first settled in IVUE but finding no peace they moved on to AWO and ONEWA in Uromi district. They still did not find the peace and quiet which they sought from Benin, so they moved forward until they got to their present site which was Irrua land. They came to ask the Ojirrua for

OJIE-OHEN AMESE

On his head he wears Igo Oghonhon and Igen Ogbohi — all prized feathers of rare birds. On his right he is holding hereditary Ada and on his left, the OSUNJOJO — the staff of the original Amese.

The present holder of the title is Chief ATIVIE.

permission to settle there and this granted, they formed one of the outlying districts of Irrua. Ujabhole has been the home of the IYASELE of Irrua from time immemorial.

12. UDOMI (805):

In 1463 when Ewuare the Selfish invited all the War Leaders in Ishan to Benin City, OGHU of IVUE asked his son to deputize for him. The son called ỌGHALA, an equally proud and assertive man like his father, refused point blank to run such an errand for his ailing father. The trouble that broke out as a result of this refusal was so much that Oghala, Oghu's son and heir was banished from Ivue. He and a large number of admirers first settled in Onewa, then Awo and finally founded a settlement of his own, which came to be known as UDOMI.

13. EKỌMỌJỌUDU (758):

This place was founded by a group of Binis from UHE in Benin, under the leadership of ỌMỌJOUDU. This camp which has grown into a big settlement is today still known as OHE.

14. IBHIOLULU (966):

The founders came from AVBIELE now Agbede. IDUMUỌGHỌDỌ (273) is closely related to the people of Ibhiolulu.

15. AFUDA (823):

This settlement was founded by men from Eguare, Irrua.

16. IDUMU-ỌZA (599):

The founders were related to the people of Ujabhole. Actually the place was originally the farming area of the first settlers of the whole place, the people of Ujabhole.

Politically all the various villages of Irrua are divided up into FOUR GROUPS:

(a) OTO-URUWA consisting of Eguare, Idumebo, Idumabi, Usenu, Akho and Usugbenu. They form the senior group.

(b) IKEKATO is made up of Eidenu, Eko-Iyobhebhe, Agwa and UGBOARE which originally was the home of the Ojirrua's executioners but as the settlement grew it was first administered as a part of Ibore.

(c) UNEA consisting of Ibore, Atuagbo and Ugbalo. They are the less talkative and most active group of Irrua.

(d) UWESSAN is made up of Ujabhole, Unogbo, Ibhiolulu, Udomi, Idumuoghodo, Afuda, Ekomojoudu and Idumu-oza. Uwessan means the centre of Ishan or deep Ishan. At that time Irrua was the headquarters for Ishan in the Greater Benin Empire. Benin people thus talked of Ishan and Irrua as if they were synonymous. The result then was that the most outlying district of Irrua came to be referred to as DEEP ISHAN, UWESSAN.

2. Present Onojie:

Is the stately ISIDAEHỌMẸN II. He was AMEDU as the Edaiken. Born in 1905, he was one of the early pupils of the Government School, Ekpoma from where he went to Government School, Uromi. In 1921 he attended the Mohammedan School at Agbede and in 1925 he was appointed Court Clerk, serving at Irrua, Ewohimi, Ubiaja and Uromi. On coming home he was installed the Edaiken and he moved to the official site of the Crown Prince at Oyomo. On the death of his father, Momodu (Osobase, more fearfully known as AKPA-KPA) in October, 1941, he became the Onojie on November 7th. 1941. He did a course

ISIDAEHOMEN II
The Ogirrua of Irrua

of study in Native Administration at The Benin Native Administration before he assumed full reins of office.

Isidaehomen II is noted for his eloquence and his free-handedness and his motto of GENEROSITY HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN TO MAKE A MAN POOR has won him myriads of friends in and outside Ishan. Much has happened since he became Onojie. The town has grown tremendously in size and importance and in the field of development. First a Native Administration Maternity was built near the N.A. Dispensary; then in March 1950, Dr. Okojie opened the Zuma Memorial Hospital which becoming a Training Centre for Grade Two Midwives, attracted many students from all over the country to the town. In 1953 the Provincial Farm at Ogba Benin was transferred to Irrua and thus Irrua became the Agricultural Headquarters for Benin Province with an Agricultural Officer stationed in the town. Towards the latter part of the year work on Telecommunication extending from Ubiaja to Ekpoma and Ekpoma to Auchi was begun with Irrua's importance as a junctional town emphasized. Erection of a Community Centre consisting of a Town Hall, a Library and Playing Fields began in the same year. On December 8th, 1953, the Oba, Akenzua II, paid an official visit to Ishan, passing a night in Irrua. Then in January 1955 the first secondary school the Annunciation Catholic College in Ishan was opened. Unfortunately his first son and heir Adulahi died prematurely in January 1959.

3. Kingmakers:

The kingmakers of Irrua are the elders of Eguare with particular reference to UWẸN-NUJE, as its name implies. The Crown Prince or Edaiken, on coming of age removes to OYOMO, close to Uwen-nuje. If the houses at Oyomo have fallen he rebuilds them and lives there until his father dies. Thus ever before the Onojie dies in Irrua the rightful successor has been already officially recognized as the future Onojie, thus cutting out unnecessary strifes. In fact, where the feud between an Onojie and his heir is not too personal, the Edaiken is already taking part in State affairs long before he actually comes to the Palace. The present Onojie, Isidaehomen II was already a Court Member before Momodu died.

On the death of the Onojie, the Edaiken, who has been under the care of Uwen-nuje, is presented formally by that quarter on the morning of installation, to IDUMUABỌKHA, who in turn, presents him to UWAGUE, the caretaker of the throne.

4. Installation:

On the death of the Onojie, the Uwague comes to take charge of the Palace at once. He is the acting Onojie and he is actually greeted with DO ỌMỌ while the Edaiken, still at Oyomo continues to be respected with NELAMAN (Greetings Oh Prince!). The Edaiken begins the burial ceremonies at once; these ceremonies are for the Ruling Family Egbele in particular and for the four groups of Irrua generally. Although the burial ceremonies for an Onojie last three months, the vital stages are over in about seven days. These are crowned with Ogbe ceremony, presided over by the Ohen Amese.

As soon as these ceremonies have been disposed of, the Edaiken is ready for installation. First he must be made to taste of lowly life: he is made to pass a night in a hut built outside Uwen-nuje. On the next morning he is presented to Idumuabokha who then presents him to the Uwague; he is then taken to the ancestral shrine where the Osukhure blesses him. At the inner throne he is counted on the throne by

the Uwague and at the 11th count he takes his seat with UKHATỌ UKPẸLE, AGBỌN SO OBỌẸ KHAMẸN; UKHALE URẸNỌMỌN! (Long may you reign, May the world be good in your time; May you be succeeded by your son!). Having performed the vital ceremonies and thus installed he can now touch the Sword of State—ẸBẸNLẸN. The Uwague then steps down for the new man acclaiming him as the new Monarch with DO OMON! The elders of Eguare follow suit. After this the new Onojie is presented to the Public, outside.

The Uwague's task is now at an end and he is rewarded with a wife and all the throne trappings are rolled up and handed over to him before he leaves.

The new Onojie can now continue the rest of the burial ceremonies which really consists of rejoicing and trying to recoup himself. He does not start taking part in public business until the end of the third month.

In strict Irrua custom the Uwague had to live in the Palace during the three months interregnum between the death of one Onojie and the succession of another. But in recent times, owing to a combination of anxiety, perfunctory respect for custom and the over-riding influence of the white man's government, the Uwague's actual stay in the Palace has been reduced to the seven days it takes to complete the vital ceremonies. His traditional reward of male and female slaves, of course, has been replaced with a wife. On the Uwague's part too, he no longer goes into the expense of using a cow to bury the late Onojie.

Until the time of Eromosele the Great, as soon as a new Onojie had come to the throne, all his brothers had to leave Eguare for their official residence at IDIDIGBA. Eromosele who only had three brothers and was only a youth when he became head of Irrua, could not stand separation from his brothers so he rescinded the law Ikhihibhojere made round about 1720.

5. Genealogical Tree:

AMILẸLẸ of UGBỌKA B/C
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|
ẸKPẸRẸIJIE, First Onojie, 1463.
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|
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| |
| |
ETAGHAIFI AMESE
|
|
OHẸNDIGBA
|
|
IKHIHIBHOJERE The Lawmaker, 1720
|
|
EDIALE
|
|
ERIAGBỌ (Promised Irrua a devil of king to serve!)
|
|
OGUN (The promised Terror!)
|
|
OKOURUWA
|
|
OGBẸIDE, The Terrible, 1840
|
|
.....
| |
| |
UWABỌR (Died) ISIDAEHỌMẸN I, 1864
|
|
QUEEN EBUADE, 1866
|
|
ERỌMỌSẸLE, The Great, 1876
|
|
MOMODU (OSOBASE, AKPAKPA) 1921
|
|
ISIDAEHỌMẸN II, 1941

6. Comments:

AMILELE, the leader of the immigrants who deserted Benin City in 1460 was already dead before Ewuare installed the first Enijie. Till this day members of the Ruling family are sometimes referred to as IBHIẸ-AMILẸLẸ.

The firstOn ojie was EKPEREIJIE who was one of the Leaders that fell victim to the diplomatic stroke of Ewuare the Selfish in 1463. He was deified and ALU-EKPEREIJIE is still a respected spot in Irrua of today.

The proper title of the Onojie of IRRUA is OJURUWA now corrupted to OJIRRUA. Upon the Ojirrua Oba Akenzua I conferred the title of OKAIJESAN about 1723. The first man to bear the title was IKHIHIBHOJERE the LAWMAKER. He came to the throne as a very young man about 1720. As most of his brothers were nearly of the same age, the trouble he got from them was so much that he decreed that from then on as soon as an Onojie died his other sons must move away from Eguare leaving the first son to rule in peace.

THE ORIGIN OF THE OKAIJESAN TITLE

During Oba Akenzua I's reign all the Ishan Enijie for the first time met at a special meeting convened by the Oba. Apart from each Onojie trying to show that he was the richest and most important by way of costly dresses and a large number of followers, there was cordiality amongst them until the Oba's Ukọ arrived with their meal which consisted of pounded yams. According to custom bits of the foufou had to be thrown out on the floor for the departed spirits, a ceremony usually reserved for the most senior in a gathering of eaters. At this particular gathering of Enijie the embarrassing question arose: Who was the most senior amongst these Rulers, each of whom was lord supreme in his own corner of Esan? The answer to this question brought sharp and acrimonious arguments which caused the foufou to remain untouched on the floor. The Ojirrua, a very young man only three years an Onojie, sat unconcerned at a corner while all the wizened Enijie were tearing at one another's throats over seniority. Then someone invited the well composed young man to perform the ceremony and save the bickering elders from disgracing themselves. That young man was Ikhihibhojere; He went through with the cutting of the foufou and peace returned to the august gathering. Then they repaired to the Palace where the Oba presented kolanuts, which as we have seen under Ishan custom, are invariably followed with arguments as to who should rightly break the nuts. On this occasion, but for the Oba's awe-inspiring presence there could have been blows; still, angry Ishan words were freely exchanged! Astonished, Oba Akenzua quietly asked, "But you have already taken your meals?" They answered yes. "Someone must have uncovered the foufou and made the customary oblation to our respected ancestors; which of you elders did that?" continued the Oba. Then came the astonishing answer that it was the Ojirrua, the youngest of the lot! "Then bring the kolanuts respectfully before him — he is your luck-appointed leader!"

This again, is the type of story that I have consistently come across built up to suit a case. What have we got to support it from history? Long before this time Irrua had already been known as the headquarters in Ishan in the Greater Benin Empire just as Agbede was for KUKURUKU District. In addition, the very first batch of deserters from the City were the founders of Irrua; they left Benin same time as the great OZA, so that the Onojie of Irrua had the advantage of age and the political importance of his domain when the question of precedence came up before Akenzua I.

From time immemorial Irrua has been a difficult place to live in, difficult for the Ruler and difficult for the ruled. Its people have always been politically conscious up to the degree of being republicans, but their

Enijie ruled them as if they were the greatest worshippers of Monarchy in the world. The result has been an unending feud between the subjects whose political boiling point soared on the slightest provocation, and the Onojie who maintained that he was born to rule and proceeded to do so in a way Nero could have envied! Thus in the history of Ishan the reign of every Ojirrua has been famous for one thing or another, but iron-handedness had been a regular feature. Another feature worthy of note is that despite this wonderful relationship between the Monarch and his subjects, the Ruling House of Irrua has been a perfect line. The only deflection only confirmed a straight genealogical line made possible by strict adherence to native laws and custom. This deflection was due to the premature death of Prince UWABOR. On his death Isidaehomen I became the heir of Ogbeide the Terrible.

Once and once only since 1460, the nearest thing to a succession strife nearly occurred. That was round about 1866 when the good Isidaehomen I died with his heir Eromosele, a minor of about five. EGBIRẸMỌLẸN, an influential man in Eguare was chosen to act as a Regent during Eromosele's minority. EBUADE the fearless mother of the minor would not have it. This woman's courage was rather unbelievable when one remembers that in those days there was no place for a woman in Ishan community. She was to be seen and married and not to be heard. Yet Ebuade was resolute in her single-handed challenge to the Kingmakers. She maintained that even if Egbiremolen was a relative (which he was not) there was bound to be succession trouble later, either when her son Eromosele had come of age or between Eromosele's heir and Egbiremolen's children; there was only one person capable of looking after her son's throne with love and sincerity: that person was EBUADE! The kingmakers gasped! But Ebuade was so brave and forceful that everybody acquiesced, giving only one important proviso. She must from then on be a man and abstain from all sexual relations. Ebuade made the promise and made history in Ishan by ascending the throne as Queen. The Uwague had to perform the yearly rites where the use of the State Sword was necessary as custom forbade a woman touching it. She ruled wisely guided her son's growth jealously and tenderly but enemies dogged her day and night, for Ebuade was a beautiful stately woman of under 30! Soon one of Oba ADOLO'S UKO (Personal Representative) called AGHẸDO, then in Irrua, after fruitless attempts to conquer the straight Ebuade, made an allegation that she had broken her sacred vow and was secretly going with men. That brought all the Otouruwa elders together for an inquisition on this proud woman who wanted to do the job of men. Ebuade stoutly denied the charge and the elders asked her to face trial by ordeal. Sasswood Poison was chosen. Being Queen, she was allowed to stand the trial by proxy. The terms of reference were if she, since she lost her husband, had cohabited with any man or had satisfied herself sexually by any other means, the poison should do its work. The Queen put her hand on the proxy's shoulder and she drank the whole bowl of potion for fear of making the angry elders feel the great Ebuade was afraid.

Providentially, the woman developed immediate and severe vomiting and recovered. What Ebuade said in her rejoicing is now embodied in one of our folklores and songs with a chorus which ends with AGHẸDO OKAN KI NE (The shame is now on Aghedo). Ebuade was again passed fit to rule men and she continued until her son was about 15 before she stepped down in his favour.

But for the courage, sagacity and influence of this woman, the history of the Ruling House of Irrua might have been otherwise.

As I have said already one good feature about Irrua is that the genealogical tree has been so pruned by strict adherence to traditions that it has grown straight. This was not due to the people's love for their ruler or because of the Ojirrua's love for the Irrua or Ishan unwritten but definite constitution but it was a result of balance of power. The word ISỌTẸ is practically an Irrua word for REBELLION. In the long line of rulers few had not been driven from home or suffered years of rebellion. The Ojirrua, had a hereditary belief that subjects, like women, should be struck occasionally like a gong, to drum sense and respect into them! The frogs even took the log for what it was — a dud! Normal Ishans have no respect for a dud, let alone the rather hardened people of Irrua. For them, it was either a Nero, or he could not stay on their throne for a night.

The star performers in the examples I have in mind are Ekpereijie right on top of the line. A man who could have a son like the unpredictable Amese certainly was fit to head Irrua: he was duly deified. OGUN was not more than 5 feet tall but the tallest men in Irrua grovelled on their bellies before him. He was so small and impish that his father ERIAGBO in his shame, wanted to kill him; "Small men have small minds" he used to say, but Irrua people refused. Then he made his famous promise: "Irrua would get a king to serve," and what a hell-cat they got when the dwarf came to the throne about 1810!

Eriagbo, unable to stand the dwarfish appearance of his son drove him from home and he fled to Ekpoma. He proceeded to groom his second son as his heir. He gave him the hearts of all animals slaughtered in the palace but this boy very carefully smoked them and stored them in a basket. When Eriagbo died, this boy was asked to perform the pre-installation ceremonies since he it was who had been eating all the hearts! He refused but set out to trace his senior brother. He found him in one of the villages at Ekpoma, told him of their father's death and requested him to return home with him. Ogun, now hardened by his long sufferings, told the boy to go home and meet him half-way the third day. On the appointed day Ogun got a calabash of poisoned palm wine and kolanuts which he at once offered to his brother who did not hide his love for him at all; the boy accepted the present as they sat on the way, but insisted on showing him all he had before he quenched his thirst with the wine; he then opened the basket, (there were now two big baskets full of dried hearts of cows and goats) and said, "These were the hearts our father had given me to eat. I knew it was not my right to do so so I stored them for you; here take them with all they signify." Quickly Ogun smashed the calabash of palm wine and threw away the kolanuts: "You are too good to die," he murmured in self-reproach. He meekly followed the boy home, was presented to the elders and after duly performing the burial ceremonies he was installed the Onojie. For all his famous name I have found no other occasion, Ogun's mind was that softened!

Ogbeide the Terrible, 1840—1864: Ogbeide, The touchstone of Ishan Autocrats, was made the OKAIJESAN by Oba Osemwede. The length and breadth of Ishan, his name even till this day, is remembered with awe, even though he reigned over a hundred years ago! His name has passed into some Ishan idioms, "OGBẸIDE GBA AGBỌN, ỌLE HE ẸIHẸ-BHAMẸN!" (Ogbeide, the one man against the world, named his child I AM INNOCENT!). It is only in Uromi had there been any Onojie as tyrannical as Ogbeide. He knew his subjects, particularly as regards their utter dislike for a dud; he was so conscious of this trait

in his subjects that once a while he did things to make them conscious that he was much in control of his own side of the world. One morning he saw a man from Usugbenu and he casually asked how were his people; the man, with a deep respect, answered, "All peace and quiet, my lord!" "H'm!" sniffed the great dictator, "Peace and quiet! Soon they will forget that Ogbeide is not dead!" He despatched a few men after whispering some instructions into their ears. An hour later bewildered people with their hairs standing on end, came to make a report at Eguare that a few men from hell, must be, were at work in the village of OKURE-LE, Usugbenu: the men of the village had all been away to their farms leaving only the women and children at home. Everywhere on the village grounds were heads of women and children! Ogbeide's instructions were that the village should be exterminated, but one woman called ỌFURE escaped with her head still on her body; this was not because Ogbeide's men from hell suffered from any dereliction of duty or wanted to try their lord's known temper by letting a soul escape when he had asked for the heads of all the inhabitants of Okurele; her escape was just a matter of extreme good luck, for when heads were falling lucky Ofure was in the latrine; as she emerged from the bush, she saw heads falling as fast as these hellish men of destruction could swing their arms; so she dived for the thicket!

The Okurele men, hearing of the massacre at home, fled out of Irrua, and OKURELE village of Usugbenu ceased to exist as a unit in Irrua!

Surely no descendants of that unfortunate village for the following 50 years would fail to hear the name OGBEIDE mentioned. It also added to the awe people felt when that name was mentioned. Fame or infamy, Ogbeide the Terrible was not particular — all he was keen about was that all eyes should be on the throne!

On another occasion, all Irrua went to help him in his enormous farm. When everybody had worked so hard that he was tired and hungry, one man, ẸHIGBỌ of Usenu, cut a small bit of sugar-cane which he chewed, but he did not know that an informant had told Ogbeide that all that afternoon Ehigbo had been after his sugar-cane! Men were despatched to all the farms around to collect sugar-canes at sight! When all the workers returned Ogbeide welcomed them with foufou, but Ehigbo was taken to a corner and shown a pile of sugar-canes as high as a house, with the simple innocuous instruction, "EAT OR DIE!" Ehigbo began to chew sugar-canes until he was full to the throat. Some daring friends whispered to him to stop swallowing the juice and let it flow down his chest. This kept him alive for the next hour but soon there was a flood of sugar cane juice flowing from his seat! Ehigbo chewed the canes till death parted them!

Ogbeide was as awesome at home as he was dreaded abroad. On one occasion a beloved wife came to greet him with her babe. He gave the six-month-old child meat which the thoughtless woman ate there and then. Quietly Ogbeide asked, "Woman, you heard me say that the meat was for my child?" The woman smiled and said: "Yes, my lord — but the baby will have it in my breast!" "Really?" asked the monarch still as cool as a cucumber. He allowed the woman to finish chewing the meat, and after she had swallowed it, Ogbeide called for a knife and slashed off the breast only to find rich milk but no meat! But what was that to Ogbeide if one of his myriads of wives bled to death?

On another occasion, and this was purely a family matter, one of the sons' wives came in to greet him with a three-month-old baby. Ogbe-

ide was pleased to see them and fondly asked the mother what the baby's name was. He was told, INẸGBESE (I have escaped the devil and all its snares). This was too much for Ogbeide who asked, "Which devil have you escaped from? How do you know you've escaped that devil?" The bewildered woman stood shivering like a leaf, not knowing what she had said to incur the almighty's ire. She had her baby on her shoulder when Ogbeide's command came and, of course, there was no disobeying it! "Remove both hands from that baby!" In a second the child went head-long from the mother's shoulder and lay smashed on the cold floor! Ah! Yes! All the harem shook with fear!

Outside the palace and Eguare, people felt his presence and authority in a way that made one wondered if Irrua would not one day go into spontaneous combustion! He knew very little of agriculture and was not particularly interested in the subject beyond getting big yams from his farm and people, each year. Whether for manure or merely through wanton depravity, he planted kolanuts with lives of human beings!

One could go for ages narrating the more easily remembered atrocious acts of terrifying his subjects, but finally, they too began to look for ways out of hell which Irrua had become. Akho fled to Obeidu; Idumebo fled to Ekpoma, Idumabi to Opoji etc. Still Ogbeide ruled ruthlessly until his oppression got to a stage when the remaining subjects, driven to the wall, were prepared to die. Sugbenu came down with a war dance so terrifying that Ogbeide, finding himself alone, fled to Uwessan. Isidaehomen who had become the first son after the death of Uwabor, wisely refused to follow his father; instead he went and placed himself at the mercy of his father's enemies — Sugbenu. So for some years the palace was vacant. Ogbeide lived in exile until his death in 1864, and then ended 24 years of hell-life for a cantankerous people.

For Isidaehomen's sake, Usugbenu agreed for the return of Ogbeide's unmourned body. Two gangs of people were sent to Uwessan for the body which had to be buried in Eguare.

ISIDAEHOMEN I, 1864—1866

He was made Okaijesan by Oba Adolo. His name is mentioned not for his wickedness but for the shortness of his reign. He had seen so much trouble as a Prince that he knew better what to do as an Onojie. He was endlessly tolerant of abuse. Because of his troubles and exile, he could not settle in time with the result that when he became Onojie in 1864, his first son, Eromosele, was only 3 years old. His second son AKEME and the third son, OSAJELE were all much younger. He had only grown up daughters, the first being IHOEGHIAN. After he became Onojie his first and main concern was to get people who had fled from Irrua as a result of his father's atrocious rule, to return. His motto was PEACE and ORDER but as would happen in Irrua, Isidaehomen died after only 2 years on the throne, and with him went what Irrua had not known for ages, Peace and love.

EROMOSELE THE GREAT, 1876—1921

He was made Okaijesan by Oba Ovonramwe. The strife that could have been inevitable was averted by Eromosele being blessed with a courageous mother. For ten years EBUADE held the reins of office. In 1876, at the age of only 15, the precocious EROMOSELE ascended the throne, but till her death in 1911 Ebuade was still the effective voice behind the throne.

Eromosele's actions and oppressions were not just dictated by hereditary tendencies. Youth worried him. Imagine an impetuous

EROMOSELE THE GREAT 1876—1921
From a photograph recovered at the Ancestral Shrine!

boy of 15, finding himself the lord supreme of all he surveyed in Irrua. His senses of appreciation were blinded by the authority he had and by the time he could think deeper, habit had taken control of his actions. Also he felt he had to be extra harsh to exact respect from his subjects who were only too ready to take the least advantage of his age.

When one studies the life of Eromosele the Great one would come to one conclusion: the white men had not come a minute too soon! In fact but for their coming Eromosele could have succeeded in setting fire to Irrua, during the 45 years he was master of the district. He had respect for only two beings: the Oba in this world and God through the spirits of his departed ancestors, in the one beyond. Truly,

"Of this dead King I could tell
What torment 't was to serve him.
God grant they love him not in Heaven
For then would Heaven be turned to Hell!
And yet he had a form so fair
That Hell were Heaven were he there!"

Indeed he was a handsome tall yellow man with a temper made worse by his handicap in talking: he stammered like a machine-gun! He was very friendly with the Oba and he paid his homage to him regularly, but he did not actually visit Benin for the formal Oba's blessing until 1895, some 19 years after he had been reigning. Both Adolo and Ovonramwe held him with the greatest esteem, not merely because of his being the Okaijesan, but for his deep respect for their authority.

Though by marrying Princess EBAJE, daughter of the great Akhigbe of Agbede, he got converted into Islam in 1897, religion was immaterial in shaping his conduct. Even after the white men came and established the Irrua Native Court in 1905, Irrua still groaned under his Neronian reign.

THE ILLEH WAR 1895

In this world, after the Oba came Eromosele, if anybody thought otherwise that was his affair! He lived and acted with this belief until the white man came. He was bold to the point of recklessness. Once he sacked the village of IMULE, in Illeh, driving the whole population to OGIDEKPE! Then he sent messengers to IHONMIDUMU in the same Illeh, to warn them that they were next on his long list of places to be raised to the ground. Inter-tribal wars and slave raiding, as normal mortals knew the art, worked on the element of surprise. Without it the raider was either killed or taken captive himself if he was lucky. Yet Eromosele sent a message to his enemies that he would be coming to war in five days! The people laughed at this stupid message and took no notice of the messengers. Two days after Eromosele sent his emissaries back to remind Ihonmidumu of his hostile visit in three days! Headed by a man called ABULU, Ihonmidumu sent back to say that they got his insulting message and if he came right then it would not be too soon. Eromosele sent back to say he would not alter the date to please them and cockcrow on the morning of the day he had appointed he defied all thoughts of ambush, led his men in and within a few hours, littered Ihonmidumu village square with heads including that of their spokesman, Abulu!

Ishan Native Laws and Custom existed for mere mortals and Eromosele was not a mere human being. Ishan custom forbade any form of sexual relation between a man and any member of his wife's family. If he tried, he forfeited his wife. But Eromosele married the author's Grandmother and her junior sister. Her other sister was married to

Eromosele's heir, Momodu! He had his own method of dealing with thieves which would confuse an enquirer and make him think Irrua custom was different from that of the rest of Ishan. All thieves were sent up to him in Eguare, and he sold, looted or detained them, at pleasure. There was one thing Eromosele lacked: he had no sentiments. Once an informant came to tell him that some cowries were missing from the Palace and that he suspected one of the harem women. He did not stop to think for a moment how any genius could discover the loss of a few cowries from the mountain heaped all over Odugha. He gave orders that all his wives' houses should be searched. Gangs of palace strongmen too eager to please their master began a methodical search with the informant leading. They combed the house of the suspect, the Onojie's favourite who the informant wanted to ruin. At long last the cowries were found at the bottom of the drinking pot of the unfortunate woman. It was a big disgrace but everybody knew the extent of Eromosele's love for this woman and hence all were sure he would do nothing that would publicly disgrace her. All the harem women were summoned by the Onojie before he gave his judgment which went into history for its terseness: The beloved, without any trial, was hanged before the stunned women!

Murderers! In all the rest of Ishan, except Uromi which was blessed with a crop of iron-fisted Rulers, murderers were dealt with by the Inotu. They had the power to forgive the murderer after he had redeemed himself or substituted a son for his head; they could kill him after a fair trial or sell him to share the proceeds. In Irrua all murderers automatically became the Onojie's property!

Eromosele could be disarmingly nice while planning a ruthless demonstration of his power. Once he took unto himself a wife. He became so fond of this new acquisition that he forgot the one hundred and one other women pining away unseen in the harem. He could give anything to please this bride. They spent practically the whole day together. One afternoon as they sat together on the main throne, the girl lay across his lap and stroked his white beard. Gleefully she said, "Unbelievable! To think this is the Great Eromosele all Irrua dread!" "M-h'm!" Eromosele smiled bitterly without ever opening his mouth. He gave his bride an extra caress, called his chief steward and whispered into his ears. The romance continued until a few hours after when the steward returned, bowed deeply and murmured, "Thy will has been done, my lord!" Eromosele gave one deep yawn and told the bride that it was time they went in for a nap. They rose and the Onojie anxious to please his beauty stepped back for her to lead. At the door to the inner quadrangle, the wife discovered that what she nearly stepped upon was a human head. She jumped back inviting the husband to take a look. With "What's that?" he made the young woman take a closer look. She screamed, for the head was that of her father! "Go on" commanded the unruffled monarch. She stepped across and again, she nearly put her delicate foot on something on the other side; she looked, then she fainted. Her mother's body lay across the other side of the gate! The Onojie fondly put his arm round the girl's waist and smiled, this time with the beard spread from ear to ear: "That is THE EROMOSELE Irrua knows!"

Although before he became a Mohammedan in 1897, he was a heathen like all Ishans who lived at the time, he sneeringly referred to his ancestors as "Goat blood drinking addicts!" He swore on any of his sons who would bring a goat within ten miles of his shrine after he was dead! But before he was dead the white man had become so firmly established

in Ishan that it was with difficulty his heir got goat flesh to worship him! Why did Eromosele have this reaction to well known method of invoking the spirits of ancestors in Ishan? In modern language Eromosele was like a boy at college wanting to get a message across to his father at home. He could convey the message in a letter and post it—his father was sure to get the message in 2 to 3 weeks if Nigerian Posts and Telegraphs was involved. If it was an urgent message, he could send a telegram and in 3 to 5 days, the old man at home would get the message, mutilated, it might be! But if the message was really urgent and the country was the United States of America, the boy could radio the message! Going to ask ancestors for approval or blessing of a son's act in this world by way of worship at the ancestral shrine was like sending a letter by Nigerian post—at best it was like sending a telegram. Eromosele could not stand that amount of delay: he "radioed" each time! Thus if he wanted to get his dead father's blessing for any action, he refused to slaughter a goat at the ancestral shrine; all he did was, he got a man, gave him a white kolanut, tied a white piece of cloth round his waist and told him what he wanted to get across to his dead father. Then he was beheaded. What could be quicker!

7. **Non-Aggression Pacts:**

It would be surprising if the home of such great mortals like Ogbeide and Eromosele ever had and respected a non-aggression oath with anybody. They respected only distance. Actually it would be correct to say Irrua made no such pact with anybody: who would risk his life and limbs trusting them?

Irrua fought Ekpoma as relentlessly as they fought Uromi or Ewu. Opoji and Ugbegun were their mortal enemies. Vaguely Irrua had qualms shedding the blood of an Ugboha man. That was only comparatively a recent affair dating from the time Isidaehomen I had married Queen Ebuade who was an Ugboha woman. Since then the tie has been maintained by marriages.

The only reason for that of Ubiaja, if ever it was made and kept, must have been the marriage of Princess ỌMỌALUSẸ, Isidaehomen's sister, to IKHINẸ of Ubiaja about the middle of the 19th century.

AGBENOJIE: The Dance of Kings!
The highly inflammable beads round the waist are indication of the wealth of the girls' parents.

CHAPTER XV

EWU (Pop. 9,074)

1. History

The correct name is ẸILU. Although after the 1953 general censor its population was given as 9,074, its correct population is much less than this, being only about 6,377. It consists of

a. EGUARE (765)
b. EHANLẸN (1,789)
c. UZOGHOLO (1,067)
d. IDUNWELE (2,290) and
e. IHẸNWẸN (324)

EKO-IDUZE, the original camp founded by the great farmer IDUZE, is rapidly growing into a village of industrious people.

The aboriginal people of EILU were the inhabitants of the place today called EHANLEN ONIHA. A superior set of people came about 1516 mostly from IDUMEBO, Benin City and they overshadowed those they had found.

One of Oba Ozolua's many sons called UGHULU was driven from the City for crimes he had committed against his hot tempered father. When leaving, many admirers and close relatives including his two maternal brothers, UAMẸN and IKPEBUA, in that order of seniority, decided to follow him into his forced exile. They all wandered on in the jungle for years until they got to a primitive settlement which today is Ehanlen Oniha. Because they said they came from Benin and because of the characteristic preferential treatment for strangers by Ishans, these three fugitive brothers soon assumed positions of importance amongst the timid, fear-to-offend community that had given them refuge. Ikpebua, the youngest, was found to be very wise and kind, so the community elected him to be their ruler, to the utter annoyance of his senior brother, Ughulu. Armed with a bow and arrows the angry man wanted to avenge this wrong done by the elders and so he proceeded to the compound of the Ekakulo, called ONUGO. This wise leader saw him and read vengeance in his eyes; he very tactfully invited him in, talked to him and finally succeeded in pacifying him by giving him his first daughter called ISẸDUA, who was a girl of rare beauty, in marriage. On seeing this lovely girl Ughulu soon forgot his anger; he married her and settled down to life near his father-in-law. His settlement became EHALEN UGHULU. The second brother, Uamen, quietly went to settle in a place that is today called IBHIUAMẸN of Uzogholo, while the youngest brother, Ikpebua, now king, moved forward to live as befitted him, in a big area known now as EGUARE.

IHENWEN:

This place was founded by some quarrelsome settlers from Ehanlen Oniha, and their name was derived from EHANLẸN-NA-AWẸN (Awẹn-wẹn meaning full of friction, troublesome).

IDUNWELE:

The origin of this village is closely tied up with the history of Ekpoma. Assailed with taunts from friends and enemies IKEAKHE the Unlucky of Ekpoma, with the largest harem in Ishan and yet having not a single son, got to a stage when he could bear no longer. He began to hit back on Ekpoma, sparing no one and often indiscriminately widely. Round about 1849, Eguare rose up against him and ejected him from Odugha. He fled to ENE. This incensed Ihonmidumu his mother's Egbele, who felt that he should have sought sanctuary in his second home. He

finally made his way back to them from where he went up to UWẸNLẸN-AKẸN (WARRAKEN). Here he enlisted the services of some Nupes headed by the two desperados, IMOGODIA and ADAUDO. These old veterans of the Nupe or Kukuruku Wars that had been revaging the northeastern districts of Ishan, swooped on Eguare Ekpoma with EMAU-DO bearing the brunt of the onslaught. Many waves of refugees left seeking peace in the rest of Ishan. Those that went via UKHUN under the leadership of ẸGWAMẸN, founded IDUNWELE.

The then Onojie of Ewu was OKOEGUALE, Eimuan's father. When Okoeguale died and Eimuan became Onojie about 1868, the newcomers had a stork for a king! His atrocious reign got beyond endurance and the more touchy ones under the leadership of ỌMỌ-RUARE, packed and left the new settlement in search of the land of freedom. They thought they had found it in UDOWO, Irrua—but at that time, sitting on the Irrua throne was OGBEIDE the Terrible!

EKO-OJEMEN is wrongfully described as founded by the fertile OJEMEN after whom the settlement was named. Eimuan had been consistently dreaded by all his subjects but towards the end of his life, he was the proverbial Stork presiding over the destiny of the Frogs who wanted a real King! The innocent were used for forced labour and the guilty were sold into slavery. Such terrorist tactics dwindled the population of Ewu very fast. One of those who fled Idunwele about 1895, was a man called ALẸNDẸ. First he fled to ỌGỌDỌGBỌ, an off-shoot of Idunwele, on the Illeh road. Three years after Eimuan died and Alende thought the danger was gone and so he returned to his village—UWẸLẸN-UDU of Idunwele. A man of great energy and construction, he found life in the village intolerable during the Ojiefo—Abhulimen tussle of 1903—this time he left it for good. He built a camp near Agwa to which he had run.

Alende had five children, three sons—AKIỌYAMẸN, EJIYA and OJEMEN, and two daughters—EJIANRE and IMAMEN. The youngest of these children was the virile, energetic, brave and abundantly blessed OJEMEN. It was a fitting memorial when the original EKO ALENDE came to be known as EKO OJEMEN.

UJAGBE was originally a part of Ewu. It ceded from Ewu in 1895, a few years before the death of Eimuan whose autocracy and atrocity were equalled only by the Enijie of Irrua or Uromi. He sold visitors, friends and even his children indiscriminately: that sort of thing made Ujagbe seek freedom under the Agbede clan.

2. Present Onojie:

OJIEFO II, who was ISẸSẸLE as Prince. He had his education at Ewu Government School which was opened in 1908. When he left school he went to Lagos as a Steward Boy. In 1932 he returned home but was driven out as a Pretender to the throne and so he went to live with his uncle, Mr. J. O. Ojiefo (now the OSHODIN of Ewu) at Sapele. At Sapele he returned to school until the Ojiefo—Omosun chieftaincy dispute was finally settled in his favour.

This young quiet man, thanks to an educated and loving uncle, Mr. J. O. Ojiefo, was able to fight a prolonged case to a successful conclusion strictly on adherence to the seven cardinal Ishan customary laws on selection, appointment and installation of an Onojie. He became the Onojie on September 11th, 1935.

3. Kingmakers:

Before this can be understood fully the different components of Ehanlen must be understood. Already we have seen that Ehanlen Oniha was already in existence before the three brothers, Ughulu, Uamen and Ikpebua came from Benin. Ehalen Ughulu was thus not in any way related to Ehanlen Oniha. What is the origin of this place then?

Round about 1490, Uda who was growing from prosperity to a state of deification in his lifetime, could do anything without anybody in Ekpoma raising a finger. He sacrificed lavishly and invariably he looked towards Ojole of Ukpoke's Ehanlen for victims to be sacrificed to his ancestors. By the time he died it had almost become a custom to look towards Ehanlen for human sacrificial victims. Thus at Uda's death in 1515, his successor, Ojieikhere, who had his father's greatness as a buttress, was out to give his illustrious father the greatest burial in all history. That of course meant the use of an alarming number of slaves! At the initial stages of the ceremonies, Ehanlen people decided to save themselves and there was an almost wholesale exodus of men under the leadership of ONUGO, from the rich oil palm grove. The migrating band settled at a spot that became EHANLEN Oniha. They still talked of their oil palm grove nostalgically and in later years, they referred to their place of origin as being from under the palms.

Although this settlement that came from Ehanlen Ekpoma was the first habitation in Ewu, it did not have its present name of Ehanlen Oniha until after the creation of the Onojie title in the area. The wise Ikpebua, in wanting to appease the leader of the people who had given them sanctuary, conferred the Oniha title, next to that of the Onojie which they gave him.

Now the relationship of the Kingmakers of Ewu can be followed intelligently. They are the elders of

1. Eguare,
2. Ibhiuamen of Uzogholo and
3. Ehanlen Ughulu.

All were places founded by the three brothers and hence are all related by blood. Ehanlen Oniha's exclusion can now be understood to be quite in order.

4. Installation:

After the heir has performed the necessary funeral ceremonies, he is installed by the Oniha, head of the original settlement that made Ikpebua Onojie about 1516.

5. Genealogical Tree:

IKPEBUA, 1516
|
EJIEKHILẸ
|
AKHIRẸMUELE
|
IKHIMIGBỌLE
|
IYOARE
|
ISIWEMẸN
|
IYENAGBE
|
OGOLOGO
|
ỌZAYE
|
IDUTE
|
AKHIMIẸMỌNA
|
OKOẸGUALE, 1845
|
ẸHIẸMUAN The TYRANT, 186
|

ABHULIMẸN	OJIEFO I	ỌMOSUN
	IJIEBỌMẸN	J. O. OMOSUN
	OJIEFO II, 11/9/35.	

6. Comments :

Ewu suffered terrible chieftaincy strife that even till today has left the people divided and some of them, full of hate. There were two major strifes in the history of the Ruling House.

(a) Ehiemuan The Tyrant (1868—1898):

Ehiemuan or shortly, Eimuan, was a great and much dreaded Onojie. As an avid slave dealer he sold all subjects of his displeasure. He had three well known sons: the first was ABHULIMEN; the second was OJIEFO the Martyr while the youngest of the three was OMOSUN. Abhulimen was so cantankerous, so lawless and destructive, that in desperation, his father sold him into slavery. All Ewu felt relieved when they were rid of him; Ehiemuan then took Ojiefo as his first son and groomed him up as his successor. On his death in 1898, the natural first son Abhulimen was nowhere to be found and might have been dead for all Ewu knew, so the Kingmakers asked Ojiefo to perform the funeral ceremonies. Having completed these vital ceremonies he was duly installed Onojie. About five years after, kind hearted Ojiefo became quite unhappy thinking that while he was Onojie his maternal brother, Abhulimen was probably serving as a slave to a lesser being. He decided to search for him at a great financial sacrifice. At long last Abhulimen was found somewhere in Northern Nigeria, a slave. Ojiefo redeemed him, brought him home, built a house for him and married a wife for him. He spared nothing to make him forget his humiliations and be a contented man. After some years evil men set to work on Abhulimen; he was told that he was his father's first son and by right ought to be sitting where meek Ojiefo was. They talked him into forgetting that but for his junior brother's kind heart he might have lived and died a slave; he ungratefully lent himself to a few men who wanted to fish in troubled waters, and Ojiefo was asked to step down for him. That was about 1910. The kingmakers of Eguare and Ehanlen Ughulu stuck to native laws and custom and to Ojiefo, but by now the white man had become the final arbiter in Ishan affairs. The District Commissioner ruled that since the first son inherits the father's property and title and there was no argument that Abhulimen was the first son, he was the rightful claimant. Despite the Kingmakers' protest that there were over-riding provisions, the Commissioner got the Government to recognize Abhulimen. Ojiefo then lodged a complaint at the Oba's Palace supported by some powerful Benin Traditional chiefs. The Benin Chiefs in Council went into the matter according to custom: true, Ishan custom laid it down that the first surviving son succeeds the father but there were important provisos — the most important of which was, HE WHO PERFORMED THE BURIAL CEREMONIES, succeeds his father. In this case these ceremonies were performed by Ojiefo, the second son as a result of the first son's whereabouts not being known. Therefore that first son had lost all rights to succession. This was exactly the point the Kingmakers had been stressing though the white man just stuck to one fragment of the laws. Ojiefo then continued as Onojie but at the expense of having made powerful enemies on the government side! The Commissioner watched his hands and feet with his district receiving extra attention.

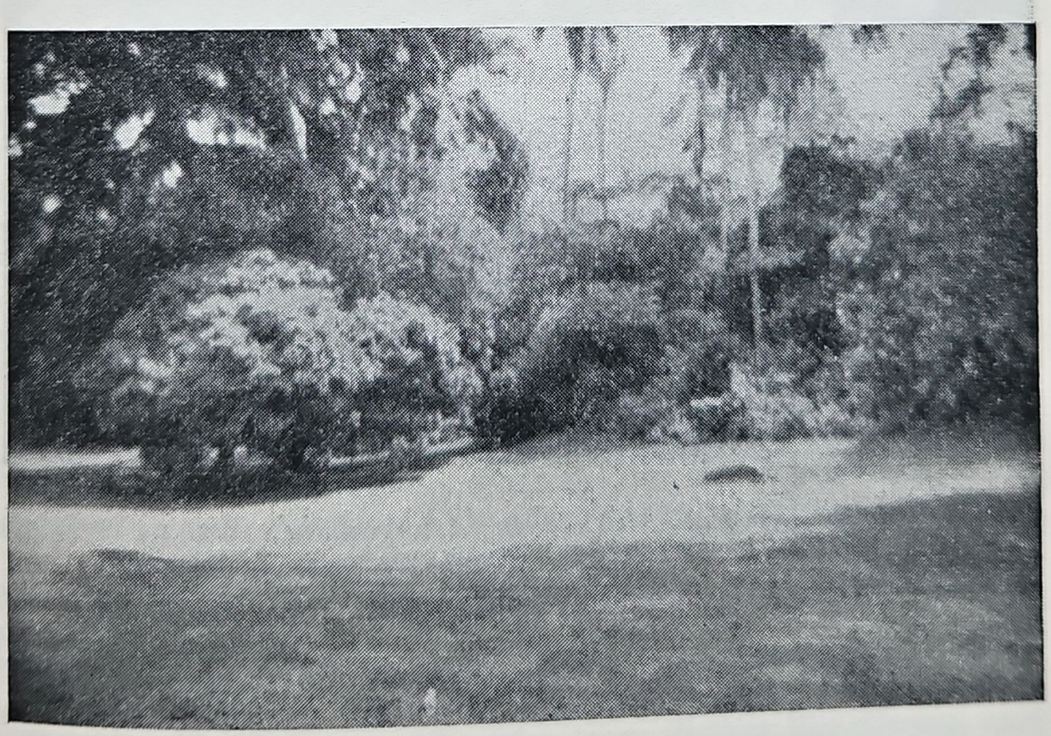
Ojiefo the Martyr, a contemporary of Eromosele of Irrua, Imadojiemu of Opoji, Ogbidi of Uromi, Okojie of Ugboha etc., was not to enjoy peace for long. In 1913 the poor man was cornered with a crime under indirect slave trade, which is today still practised in Ishan — pawning of children! It was a quick business sending him in for two years. His

heir, IJIEBOMEN was made the Regent, but in 1915, some traders passing through Ewu were looted, allegedly, under Ijiebomen's instruction. He was tried at the Native Court at Irrua and sent to meet his father for four months. That was enough for the sticky Ojiefo family. Then arose the question of Regency. Brave Omosun, Ojiefo's junior brother was made the Regent in 1916 after a short interregnum. On Ojiefo's return, the Government supported by all Ewu, not knowing the grave consequences, advised that Omosun should be allowed to pass the rest of his life as a Regent. Then fate struck the Ojiefo family again. Ojiefo himself predeceased Omosun, in 1928, and to worsen matters, his heir Ijiebomen died in 1930, leaving Omosun squarely on Ewu Throne. In September 1932, Omosun himself died and a real succession tussle began for Ewu. Mr. J. O. Omosun, the late Omosun's heir claimed the Onojie title while ISESELE, though very young, maintained that by right, as heir to Ijiebomen, Ojiefo's eldest son, he should be made the Onojie. The then District Officer, Commander Pykenott (Later Lieutenant Governor, Eastern Region till 1953) decided in favour of Mr. Omosun who now backed by the Resident, was installed. Led by Mr. J. O. Ojiefo of the Posts and Telegraphs, Sapele, the Ojiefo family petitioned His Excellency the Governor that theirs was the correct line and not that of Omosun. The Governor, of course trusting the Officers on the spot, replied that SINCE A VAST MAJORITY OF EWU PEOPLE WERE SOLIDLY BEHIND OMOSUN he saw no reason to intervene. In point of fact there was no gainsaying it, that Omosun was the choice of all Ewu. The tenacious Ojiefo family were undaunted and they put up yet another petition to His Excellency telling him that they had never argued that a majority of the people were for Omosun; their contention was that the Onojie title in Ishan was a constitutional monarchy guarded jealously by Native Laws and custom. It was too sacred to be left to the caprice of popular vote. They implored His Excellency to be guarded by what was right and not the popularity of a contestant. They added that in all these matters of Onojie in Ishan, the Oba of Benin who originally installed Enijie should be an authority. The Governor duly referred the matter to the Oba and with the Resident present, he went into the laws and custom and found that the Omosun line began as a regent; but for the mistake of respect for Omosun's person, in allowing him to continue as a regent when the substantive holder of the title had returned from prison, all these disputes could have been avoided. In Ishan custom once a man has been duly installed nothing but death removes him. Imprisonment or deportation might deny him of government recognition but did not and could not remove his birthright of Onojie title from him. On the Oba's strong recommendation, Isesele won the fight and on September 11th 1935, he was installed Onojie of Ewu.

THE TWO OLDEST SPOTS IN ISHAN

ALU-OTO-EGBELE

Silhouetted against the modern road is the present Priest, Iyorah. The spot is now surrounded by a jungle.



The famous ALL-UROMI Meeting Place under the UTIANTIANLEN at Ughe-EGBELE. Under the trees are the low bamboo seats.

At the Pot Market in Asukpodudu's Uzea

CHAPTER XVI

UROMI (Pop. with Uzea, 40,234)

HISTORY:

The correct name is URỌNMUN.

This name was unknown before the arrival of the immigrants mostly from IDUMUOZA of Benin City, during the mass exodus following Oba Ewuare the Selfish's inhuman mourning laws. It would be a mistake to think that there was no human settlements in the land today called Uromi before 1460. Just as ORAMIYAN arrived to rule the people already in existence in Benin, so the Binis fleeing from autocracy and the selfishness of Ewuare, arrived various parts of Ishan to dominate and in many cases, to eliminate the primitive aboriginal settlers, who through civil wars, the harsh rule of the pre-Oramiyan Bini Kings known as OGISO, sought refuge in the unknown jungles of Ishan between 900 and 1400 A.D. These early settlers who left Benin in inconsequential numbers, were either criminals or fugitives and so had to lead the secretive, wary and timid lives of men bent on not BEING FOUND OUT. Such then was the life possible before 1460.

The founder of the first settlement in Uromi was the second of three brothers, all sons of an erring Oba's wife, called OAKHA. To save her life, the dutiful and loving sons escaped with her into the jungle where at least, there was a chance of surviving hunger, pestilence and wild animals. With Oakha in Benin, her doom at the hand of her angered husband was certain. After wandering for months they reached a spot where the second son called ẸGBẸLE, a man handicapped by mutilated fingers and toes, thought they had but a safe distance between their mother and the avenging Oba, their father. ASUKPODUDU, the senior, who was in command of the escape said that the anger of their father, Oba Ẹgbẹka, would know no limit as a result of they, the sons, cheating him by making his vengeance on Oakha impossible. He would traverse jungles, uphill and down-dale to get his victims. Therefore he counselled going further so that the Oba would take them as dead—possibly fallen victims of the ferocious animals that then roamed the virgin jungles.

Egbele said that far, was the limit he could go with his handicap—locomotion being really a torture to him. He proceeded to unload his property. Oakha who loved all her children who had left the 'security' of Benin for the many enemies in the wild jungle, could not help but follow the senior. Similarly the junior son was for Asukpodudu. Where Asukpodudu with the youngest brother finally settled is today UZO-ZOGHAINGHAIN of Idinegbon of Uzea. As the fugitives got surer of themselves in their primitive hide-out, they re-established connection with their determined brother, whose settlement is known today as IDUMU-OTỌ-ẸGBẸLE. This is the connection between Uzozoghain-ghain Uzea and Uromi.

Many of the early people who came to bear company with Asukpodudu's second brother came from this place in Uzea. It is therefore plain that in talking of the origin of a large district like Uromi, care must be taken. Patience and care are required in listening to many old men who on being asked, "What's the origin of Uromi?" glibly answer, "Uzozoghainghain" or simply, "Benin!"

During the organized mass exodus of Binis in 1460 therefore, those

who finally reached the present Uromi area found human habitation. That place was OTO-EGBELE and its people can be taken as the aboriginal settlers of Uromi or even Ishan.

The members of the Ruling House were the leaders of the organized immigrants who left the disintegrating Great Benin Empire in 1460. The disciplined body had three leaders of note, all said to be BROTHERS. They were said to be the founders of the Ruling Houses of Irrua, Uromi and Ubiaja. In their migration they led their people to a place where they found human life at Egbele. At a point today marked by ALU-OTOEGBELE, they stopped for rest and division of their property, consisting of IVIE (Coral beads), slaves etc. Then they separated. The senior brother went to the place that is today Eguare Irrua, the second to a place that is today Ivue while the third settled further on in a district that grew into Ubiaja.

Again and again the reader must be warned about the use of the word BROTHER in Ishan and by all Africans. Until modern times when people became less sentimental, places founded by brothers years and years ago, lived as such however far apart, and the spilling of blood amongst them was strictly forbidden, at the pains of causing the ire of departed forefathers, e.g. Ekpoma, Egoro and Opoji; Emu and Ohordua, Ubiaja and Udo etc. In such genuine cases throughout our history, there was no record of inter-tribal wars. But it is not so with Irrua and Uromi, or Uromi and Ubiaja. The great Irrua—Uromi War of 1892 and the incessant Uromi—Ubiaja Wars that drove Ubiaja Ruling Family from Oyomo refers. The truth then is that these leaders from Benin were merely brought together by a common foe, having come from different parts of Benin.

All these are by the way; what really concerns us is that these organized and victorious settlers, who fed up with life under a despotic Oba, wanted a place they could live like human beings. They were no fugitives — actually they had beaten Ewuare each time he had tried to force them back to the city during the exodus; they were free and proud men who had no trouble in dominating their surroundings. A proud and progressive community soon began to grow at Ivue, under the leadership of OGHU or OWU.

In 1463, Ewuare the Selfish saw the futility of trying to rebuild the great Benin City that cracked up under his inhumanity, by forceful return of determined subjects who had migrated to other parts. He saw the wisdom of stooping to conquer. He sent out invitations to all the leaders of the deserters, who he now recognized as true leaders of their respective community: he wanted to honour them with titles! From all corners of the area today comprising Ishan went undefeated warriors at the head of their settlements.

Oghu unfortunately could not honour the invitation as he had incapacitating Tertiary Yaws of the soles of his feet, which made walking appear as if he was stepping on red hot coke: the journey to Benin then took 4—6 months, through roadless jungles! So Oghu asked his Senior Son ỌGHALA to deputize for him. Oghala, a proud and lazy type, told his father he was not the type of man that should be trekking through forests, not even to please an ageing father! In the midst of a family squabble that followed this disobedience Oghu succeeded in getting his junior brother, ICHESAN, to attend the Oba's Palace for him. There, as had been seen already, Ewuare played his master stroke; working on the human love for power, he created those who attended OJIE (King) of their people and made it abundantly clear that the honour was not transferable. The title made each invested person the unques-

tioned ruler and master of his people, responsible only to his good self—EWUARE! He made them come to believe that they were no longer mere mortals and that there were then few men in the world they could shake hands with. Thus junior brothers, sons and in some cases, Chief Stewards, found themselves Rulers of their communities, and masters of all, including those who had sent them.

At Ivue Ichesan returned to tell Oghu, his senior brother, that he was now the lord of the community at Ivue. To spare himself and his senior brother embarrassments, he moved further away to live in a spot that is today, EGUARE. When they arrived at this spot they found a very small and primitive habitation in a place which, today, is first in Eguare—OKPUJE. This quarter was named after the man who was found in this lonely settlement with his family. Eguare has been consistent in carrying forward this recognition of 'First come first served.' No matter how old a man is today in any other part of Eguare, he could not be made the Odionwele. That title is reserved for the oldest man of Okpuje, who automatically becomes the Odion of Eguare. Uromi, the largest single district in Ishan, consists of three groups representing the centre, the right and the left flanks of the army. These groups are:—

A. OKHIODE:
1. Ẹguare 2. Ẹgbẹle 3. Onẹwa
4. Utako 5. Unuwazi 6. Aruẹ.

B. OBIRUAN:
1. Ẹbhoyọma 2. Efandiọn 3. Ekhuẹ
4. Uwalọr 5. Ubierumu 6. Idumọza
7. Erọr 8. Ivue 9. Obeidu.

C. OBIYUAN:
1. Ukoni 2. Amẹdẹokhian 3. Awo.

EGUARE (2,811):

This itself consists of

(a) OKPUJE which was the aboriginal settlement in Eguare. The founder is believed to have been a dissatisfied man from the original Ohonsi or Egbele settlement.

(b) ODIGWELE was originally the place where slaves were kept, the man entrusted with this job being ỌKAIWELE.

(c) IKEKIYALA: Here the Onojie's executioners lived. The condemned had to be first washed with native medicines by Idumuje (Idumu-Ijie).

(d) OYOMO is the residential place of the Crown Prince. As a minor he lived first at UWALOR. When his grandfather died and his father became Onojie, the Prince now moved forward to Oyomo—getting to Odugha inch by inch!

(e) OKHIERANLEN: So called because here Ichesan's party first stopped to cook their meal. It was the hiding place for slaves.

Eguare therefore had two distinct origins. The Ruling family was founded by Ichesan, whose senior brother, Oghu, was the leader of the second batch of deserters from Benin City. A majority of these original men came from IDUMOZA Quarter of the City. Ichesan, now Onojie of the new settlement of Eguare, soon surrounded himself with servants, slaves and men seeking protection. Thus right from the time Ichesan's children were sent to Herbalist IJIẸ at Ebhoyi, Eguare came to contain nobody likely to cause friction for the Onojie, but only those from whom nothing but cringing obedience was expected. To ensure this, any princes who was found still living in Eguare when Onojie, their father, had died, had their property seized by the heir, their brother. The late Prince USIAHỌN'S case is fresh on most people's minds since it happened

in modern time; Usiahon's 8 wives and property passed to UWAGBALE, and his heir, Thomas Ojeabulu Okojie, got nothing.

EGBELE (2,263):

This is the oldest settlement in Uromi. But for the domineering attitude and the actual superiority of the new-comers, the early settlers of Egbele could have remained distinct from the rest of Uromi, which was made up of the Onojie and his family and subsequent immigrants who came to join him. This is supported by the fact that Egbele do their OTO worship separately while the rest of Uromi have theirs performed by the people of Unuwazi. Secondly, after an Onojie has been installed in Eguare, custom demands that he must come to ALU-OTO-EGBELE for his final installation as owner of ALL Uromi land.

As happens to every settlement other immigrants came to swell the ranks of the first settlers. Men came to live near friends, wife's people or came seeking protection from enemies in their original home. Soon these new-comers who Ishan custom gave equal status as those they found, got swallowed up in the growing community. Only evidence we have today of their alien origin is the fact that they could marry from the families of the aboriginal people. Egbele was no exception. Other immigrants came to swell the population. To understand the growth of a town, we will take Egbele quarter by quarter.

(i) IDUMU-OTO-EGBELE: In strict sequence of settlement this is the oldest habitation in Ishan, senior even to ancient Uzea. When the children of OAKHA fled with her round about 1395, Egbele who was handicapped by deformed hands and feet, was the first to tire after months of trekking and wandering in the merciless jungle, and so he settled here while Asukpodudu with the mother and the youngest son went on. Egbele's first settlement is today a sacred spot and is marked by a shrine — ALU-OTO-EGBELE. The priest is the official holder of EHỌLỌ and the present holder of the title who traces his descent from Egbele, is IYORAH.

(ii) IDUMU-ESELE: This was founded by ESELE — the junior brother of Ichesan. He was in charge of the Onojie's ward-robe; one day while walking across a corridor one of the Onojie's wives cautioned him so that he might not make the mistake of stepping across her legs, an act equivalent to adultery in Ishan; this very much annoyed Esele and to avoid future friction, he decided to run to Irrua. On his brother later hearing of this unfortunate incident he went after him and begged him to come back. Esele would not forgive the woman but seeing his brother so sorry he agreed not to go so far as Irrua but insisted settling where his brother caught up with him. The Onojie then cut a stick and planting it for future reference, he warned his junior brother to remember URỌN-LẸN IGBOBHIO (Whatever happens blood is thicker than water!)

(iii) AFUDA was founded by some of the princes from Ebhoyi.

(iv) IDUMUEKHUERE: The founders were natives of Agbor.

(v) IDUMUAGBALA of the beloved AGBA fame, was founded by men from AVBIELE (Agbede).

(vi) UKPATO was founded by some of the fugitives that fled OKAIGBEN Ewohimi same time as the great Blacksmith OMI of Amedeokhian.

ONEWA (1,126):

The first inhabitants were the people of Udomi part who were some of the followers of Oghala of Ivue. Some of them came from Ebhoyi.

UTAKO (650):

This place in the main had a double origin. A part came from

Okaigben, the actual founder being OKOGUN who was the first ISỌDỌLE; the other part was founded by men from Idumesogban in Ebhoyi. IDUEDESO quarter was founded by a native of Ighanlan (Igalla).

UNUWAZI (618):

They are the worshippers of the general OTO UROMI. A majority of the early inhabitants came from Avbiele and hence were of the same set as the founders of Idumuagbala of Egbele. Only the founders of ODOGBẸ were of different stock; they came from OTE near Ebhoran in Kukuruku Division. Of the other immigrants who came to make up Uromi, only Egbele is senior by age of arrival, to Unuwazi. Their traditional dance is AYELE which is danced every other year during the worship of ỌLAAN.

ARUE (1,732):

Part came from Uzea and EKWEI (Ekperri). In those days of terrible superstition, the first son in each family used to be hidden so that he could grow up without inciting anybody's jealousy. Thus the great EBOLO of Odogbe in Unuwazi had sent his heir to grow in Arue. This man later founded UZENEMA Quarter of Arue. His own heir was the great IDU — founder of Obeidu.

EBHOYOMA (EBHOYI, 5,769):

Soon after Ichesan settled in Eguare his family increased in proportion to his harem. This large family was struck with an epidemic, not unlike Cholera. All about the harem and Odugha men and children lay prostrate after prolonged vomiting and loose bowels. Ichesan's first thought was that the wrath of his ancestors had descended upon him for what Ewuare made him do to his senior brother, Oghu. Goat blood flowed from the ancestral shrine but members of his family continued to drop like flies, until a great medicine man called IJIẸ came from EMU. He saved the Onojie and his family from a sure extinction. Lavishly rewarded herbalist Ijie was implored not to return to Emu but to live nearby as the herbalist to the Onojie. Agreed, he was sent to one of the Onojie's hereditary chiefs, the Esongban. Where he settled is today IDUMIJE. This quarter is the first and most vital in Ebhoyi as regards the ceremonies surrounding burial and installation of Uromi Enijie. They are responsible for all acts of purification and protection of the throne. A man to be killed for appeasement of the Royal ancestors had to be washed with medicines by the descendants of Ijie.

Esogban was already living in this area before the arrival of Ijie, but the quarter founded by him, IDUMUGHELE of Idun-Esogban had to be second to that of Ijie, because of the important personalities Idumije contained—Ijie himself and the princes sent to him for care. On Ichesan's death all the Princes with the exception of the heir, went up to their guardian or second father, Ijie who had saved them all years before. This was the origin of the plan of sending princes to Ebhoyi on the death of their father. As an equivalent of the modern family doctor, ever before the death of Ichesan, Ijie had become so well known and loved that a better guardian could not have been found for Ichesan's children. Secondly the Ishan word for brother is OBHIABA. There is an Ishan saying that IBHIABA BABAỌRIA which means that "Brothers' jealousy is as hot as fire!" And to minimise the jealousy that was bound to arise, the heir on coming to the throne, was protected by sending all his brothers away from Eguare.

At Idumije everything was done to curb the desire to return to Eguare. The princes had the advantage of having their health guarded by the best medicine man in the land. An efficient Smithy was later built there to keep the young rascals occupied. The man in charge

of this place called INẸLẸN became the founder of IDUMIGUN Ebhoyi.

When Agba the Beloved died and his first son, IKẸNOA succeeded as Onojie, his brothers headed by Onina left for Ebhoyi. Onina became the founder of AFUDA of Ebhoyi. Thus the history of Ebhoyoma is closely tied up with the history of the Ruling House. If a Prince being the son of the late Onojie, died in Eguare, the Onojie had to inherit his property, with or without an heir—another incentive making the Onojie's brothers anxious to leave Eguare for him!

EFANDION (3,083):

Efandion is the traditional home of the Oniha. The Idumu-oniha quarter was founded by ỌKHALE, Omi's third brother, who had escaped from Okaigben in Ewohimi. Some of the earliest settlers of Efandion came from Ehanlen Ewu, being the followers and descendants of the great warrior, Ojeade. Some of these people, now scattered all over Uromi are referred to by the group name of ẸGBẸLE-IMIOKOKO.

EKHUE:

The founders came from Udo.

UWALOR N'OKE (965):

Some of the founders were from Okpuje of Eguare while others were princes from Ebhoyi.

UBIERUMU (2,472):

Ubierumu has had a rather nomadic antecedent. First it was a large settlement in an area between Oyomo and Awo; from here they migrated and the few who remained are the inhabitants of OKHẸLẸN today where the OHEN OSENOBULA is found. This Ohen still maintains connection between those who had left the old settlement and those left behind. When they left they settled in a place that is today, UBIERUMU NA UWA. Later in search of peace they packed but the deserted village was later occupied by individual wanderers also in search of a safe hide-out, so that the people of Ubierumu Na Uwa have no consanguinity with the people of Ubierumu proper or Okhelen.

The origin of the present Ubierumu can be seen to be by and large, from Okhelen. Some of them also came from Ebhoyi while others are descendants of EGBELE IMIOKOKO.

Ubierumu had a very important position in Uromi for to them really belongs the office of the Onojie's Osukhure and were the key-men of the Onojie's IHOGBE. But owing to their distance from the palace, particularly after they had migrated twice, the office and all functions connected with it, gradually and over the years, passed from Ubierumu to ẸWẸLẸ of IDUMUẸWẸLẸ, just round the corner from Odugha. To them too belongs the office of the Priest of AGBA SHRINE. Although in recent times attempts were being made to cheat them of this birthright, by making men from Efandion alternate with them, right from the time Agba was deified round about 1489, it had been customary to choose the priest which is hereditary from Ubierumu. Throughout the long years from 1489, it will be seen that not more than two or three times had a successor been chosen from Efandion. In fact the only one that was well known from Efandion was OKODUGHA. In those days of fear of departed spirits, it would be a mad man who would try to usurp an UKHURE that is another's right. It was not the kind of thing one could play politics with!

These two traditional offices of Osukhure and Ohen Agba play a great part in the tradition and custom of Uromi. No nation can really be great if it has no regard for its good traditions and custom. A people's culture is often based upon their tradition and custom; where such people change from year to year, they can have little to call their great past or even a nucleus to build upon. Thus I feel it is a matter of years more before Ubierumu would have ceased to have any traditional significance in Uromi, even if modern civilization has not been allowed to blot out the tradition and custom of Ishan.

With this feeling in mind I asked one old man in Uromi why these changes should have been allowed. The old man blinked, brought out his small bottle of snuff, took a pinch, went into a paroxysm of sneezing and when he had stopped seeing stars, answered: "Many many years ago a young man was standing in the main square at Ubierumu watching another young man climbing a palm tree. Unfortunately the climber missed a step and fell off with his ropes to the ground. He died with a smashed skull. The young onlooker at once began to yell for help. A man ran along and asked him what was the matter; he pointed to the limp body on the ground. The new-comer asked in amazement how he got so broken up. The young man fastened the dead man's climbing ropes, in a twinkle of an eye he was half-way up the tree and then, he made a jerk, lost balance and came down with a smash: he lay limp with a broken spine. "Hi-i-i Abamen!" exclaimed the new-comer. He gave one loud yell and before he could repeat the air rending yell, a man came running with, "What's it, what's it?"

For answer, the excited man put up the climbing ropes, repeated the performance but beat what he saw by landing on his head: he passed out, outright! "He-u! he-u!" exclaimed the new man. He gave a terrifying throatful which sent a passing hunter hurrying to his aid. "Be la Oko?" (What's it, my boy?), he asked panting. Pointing to the three bodies on the ground, he fastened the ropes, went up the tree, removed his hands and he came crashing to the ground, pinned to a stump! "Amio Olo!" (Wonders!), the hunter exclaimed. A farmer who was going to his farm heard the ejaculations and rushed to see what was the matter, only to see the tragedy repeated in its full length. By mid-day only women and children were left in that quarter of Ubierumu!"

The old man who went into all this fable instead of answering my question, brought out his snuff bottle again and when he had recovered from the apparently satisfying convulsions, he wiped the tears off his eyes, took one long look at me and asked, "Now, my boy, is it wise for a nation to leave vital customary ceremonies in the hands of such men?"

Very forceful and clever argument, I admit, but when it comes to telling derogatory stories about other's village, the enquirer must be on his guard. It is my conviction that our forefathers who placed these offices on men from Ubierumu were no fools. They, simple but incorruptible, established these rites which were the corner-stones of our traditions.

IDUMU-OZA (1,839):

This place was founded by men from various parts of Ishan. Many were princes who had left Eguare, Uromi. Some were members of Egbele Imiokoko while the rest were some of the Ugbegun people who fled Irrua during the Irrua—Ugbegun Wars.

EROR (1,047):

A majority of the early settlers came from Okaigben in Ewohimi.

IVUE (2,381):

The second batch of Binis who left Benin City during the time of Ewuare the Selfish, and headed for the Esan country, were mostly from IDUMUOZA Quarter of the City and were under the leadership of OGHU. First they settled very near Irrua, at a spot today marked by EKO-ẸIMUHI. Incessant friction and unpleasantness from Irrua as a neighbour, made Oghu move further to his final settlement at Ivue, the actual original settlement being OBHIEI, where the Ohen Oghu is found today.

When Ichesan returned from Benin to tell Oghu that he had been made Onojie, that is, Ruler of his people, and that all in Ivue then had become his subjects, wisdom counselled his moving away from the original settlement to save himself and his brother sure friction. According to Ishan custom, it is the junior brother who pays homage to his senior; thus though Ichesan had become the overlord of the settlement he was wise not to expect or demand homage and the yearly tributes from his senior brother Oghu with the result that traditionally Ivue paid no such tributes to the Onojie at Eguare.

IDUMUẸIGHA part of Ivue was founded by Ẹigha, one of Oghu's sons. ODẸHAN, Oghu's second son, founded IDINGUN. This settlement was increased in population by immigrants who came later from Eben's Idumu-Igun of Igueben. Here the titled man of Ivue is founded today, because after Oghu had driven his stubborn first son, Oghala, founder of Udomi, Irrua, Odehan, the second son naturally assumed the role of the heir.

OBEIDU (1,367):

The very first quarter here was founded by IDU, the first grandson of Herbalist Ebolo of Odogbe, Unuwazi. Some of the founder's children who had become recognized native doctors, migrated to start a settlement, IDUNEGBON of Idumebo, Irrua.

UKONI (2,186):

This large village consists of

1. IDUMUỌDAFẸN.
2. IDUMUỌDIỌN.
3. IDUMUẸSỌLỌN with IDUMERAN.
4. IDUMUOGO with IDUMEKA.

UJIAGBỌDỌR was the second son of Agba the Beloved; he was living in a Camp. When he fell sick the Onojie, his father sent a powerful native doctor called AWẸNWẸN, to go and treat him. This man was a native of Igbaken. When he got better he prevailed upon the herbalist to remain with him and protect him from the incessant waves of Amedeokhian warriors' troubles. Where the Prince settled became IDUMUODAFEN while the settlement of the doctor and his family became IDUMUODION. Awenwen's junior brother called ỌMỌNỌALE founded IDUMUESOLON. The founders of Idumeka were from Idumeka of Efandion. Prince Ujiagbodor's junior brother, IHANMỌLẸN, founded IDUMUOGO, which was thus an off-shoot of Idumuodafen.

Some of the early settlers of Ukoni were members of Egbele Imiokoko, descendants of the great war-lord, Ojeade of Ewu.

AMEDẸOKHIAN (2,845):

There are two main quarters: IDUEDEVA and IDIGUN, and their history makes interesting connection between Ewohimi and several places in Uromi.

The great founder of Okaigben in Ewohimi called ẸZẸNỌMỌN

came direct from Benin City to join the Onojie of Ewohimi. He died leaving four principal sons — OMI, ỌDIALE, ỌKHALE and OKOGUN. Like the children of all great leaders, they themselves were men of considerable respect amongst the people they led. The second brother Odiale, was an Ibieguae, but he committed adultery with one of the Onojie's wives, and according to tradition, irrespective of birth, the punishment was death, the alternative of banishment could only be decreed at the Onojie's pleasure. In this case, it pleased the Onojie to demand Odiale's head, and despite the stiff opposition of the other three brothers, supported by the whole of Okaigben, the Onojie got that head! Okaigben people were incensed, crying that they had left Benin because of the Oba who was not subjected to any constitutional check, and now this was their reward. They decided to seek a new home but the three brothers decided to have their own back on the tyrannical Onojie before seeking peace and happiness somewhere like the majority of their people who had already begun to risk the jungle rather than remain at Ewohimi.

Soon all Ewohimi was summoned to Eguare as there was an impending attack from a neighbouring chieftain. As usual there had to be a preliminary war dance to ensure everybody was in a state of frenzy before talk of war would have any meaning. But the three brothers needed no such working up, though they were very grateful for the frenzied state of the others, for in the confusion, they fell upon the Onojie and his head rolled on the ground. Instead of the intended meeting to plan how to meet an outside enemy, here was war right in their midst! The rest of Ewohimi attacked the people of Okaigben, the result being that many of the inhabitants who had not originally planned to migrate, sought refuge anywhere else in Ishan. The three brothers who had carefully made their plans left, heading for IGHANLAN.

At Ubiaja someone tried to coax them into staying but they felt that with the nearness of that place to Ewohimi, their heads were not worth more that a few cowries; so they trekked on till they got to a lowly settlement called OKPUJE where a man called ODEVA stopped them, asking them where they were going to. Omi, the leader told him they were on their way to Ighanlan. "Oh! a long, long way yet, come in and have a smoke!" urged Odeva, after whom the more inclusive name for the small Okpuje, was named. As they were enjoying Obodo, the long pipe of friendship, Odeva got the strangers to unload their minds. "You have come a long way," said Odeva, in that well known sympathetic voice that had won Uromi many inhabitants through the ages: "Rest today and leave first thing tomorrow." The fugitives who were glad for a chance to rest their acheing legs, acquiesced. Next morning Omi woke to find Odeva's children scraping roasted yams with flat pieces of the back of palm branches. "What!" he exclaimed, "Cutting yams with sticks! Where are your knives?"

"Knives?" cried the children; "Never heard the word before!" Omi, who just could not hide his amazement, called out their kind host and narrated what he saw the children doing, ending with, "I say, where are your knives?" "Knives?" cried Odeva, "Knives! What are they — are they like the Onojie's Ebelen? Poor men don't have Ebelen!"

For answer, Omi who was himself a first class blacksmith, called out his junior brothers, emptied their bags and within a short time they had rigged up a smithy. He beat a knife out of a piece of iron, called for a piece of yam and slashed it in a way an executioner with a new Ebelen (State Sword) could have envied! Odeva's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets! Yells upon yells of admiration came off his opened

mouth and this brought a few of his co-villagers to his door. Odeva narrated how he found the men and how from a piece of EMATỌN Omi had fashioned out a miniature Ebelen, the nearest cutting thing yet known to them! As a confirmation Omi made more knives, ELO (women's type of knives), and from a bigger piece of iron, he made a 'wider knife' which stuck to a stick was used for digging! (Hoe). From a much bigger piece, he made a large knife for cutting down trees (Matchet).

"You will not leave us!" cried all Okpuje. All Alu-Idigun were desecrated, the god of iron being stolen for Omi to make what he called UKPOGHALE for them! The elders despatched messengers to inform the Onojie of the wonders of the new arrivals to their settlement: "They make Ebelen of various sizes and shapes, all extremely useful!" they asked the messengers to convey to the Onojie. The nearby settlement of IMIOMUZA was also informed of the wonderful news.

The Okpuje elders loaded Omi with bribes, including a wife in an attempt to make him forget Ighanlan. Imiomuza people also gave him a wife. The Onojie sent that such men must be made to stay at all cost, making good his word by sending a wife and requesting Omi to call upon him at Eguare. At Eguare, when the Onojie had seen what Omi could do he proceeded to confer the title of ONIHA, next only to that of Onojie. But Omi declined the offer telling the Onojie that he was a busy blacksmith and would not have time for frequenting Eguare; so he put his immediate brother OKHALE forward and he was duly installed, while the most junior brother OKOGUN, was created the ISODOLE. The Onojie, thus was able to get at least two of the three brothers to come and live near him, the Oniha moving to Efandion while the Isodole went to Utako.

Meantime Omi's influence and riches increased; he already had three wives and from all Uromi came men to buy what is used to 'divided something' (Oghale), and hoes. One day he came to see the Onojie and at the Palace he saw some newly woven baskets which fascinated him just as much as his knives had made Odeva marvel. He told the Onojie these strange things would be excellent for carrying charcoal from the fields to his smithy. He was bent on buying the baskets, but so fascinated was he that he removed the costly Coral Beads round his neck in exchange for these mere cane work, to the great astonishment of the courtiers. They wondered not at his wealth but at his stupidity: "Imagine exchanging Coral Beads for mere OKHUALE! He must be a sheep—a damn fool!" The name stuck! From that very day he was referred to as OMI NO OHUAN (Omi the Sheep!).

When the great blacksmith died, he was deified for his great contribution to arts and crafts in Uromi. Amedeokhian who descended from him came to be known as IBHI OMI NO OHUAN. His great shrine today still stands at Amedeokhian and the priest who descended from him is OKHUELEGBE.

2. Present Onojie:

Is UWAGBALE. He is one of the most loved Enijie in Ishan today. He lost the sting of a firm ruler, the day he heard a cork say goodbye to a bottle, and today, he is a joyous, innocuous Onojie, more anxious for peace and happiness, than to indulge in the serious study of statecraft. His disposition is such that he could not make an enemy of a man for long.

Ruler of a district where politics is carried on rather to the detriment of its welfare, Uwagbale has done all he could to preach by his tolerance

for less malice and more charity in politics. He has had two stretches on the throne of Uromi — first as a young handsome Regent when his father was arrested and deported in 1919. He acted in this capacity till 1931 when Ogbidi returned. He stepped down for his father and returned to Oyomo, the Crown Prince's official residence. On the death of Ogbidi in 1944 he came to the throne *de jure*.

In his lifetime he has seen a rapid growth of Uromi with a terrifying political consciousness of his subjects. But for the Ishans' respect for unwritten but definite constitution and the guidance of his educated heir, Prince C. U. Eidenojie, there is no doubt he could have become a mere puppet by now. The town of Uromi has grown considerably, its large market, the largest in Ishan, being a great incentive to foreign settlers. Started by the Catholic Mission and buttressed by the progressive people of Uromi, a Hospital on the way to becoming a combined Government-Mission Effort, was opened in 1948. That too has added another fillip to the growth of the district.

3. Kingmakers:

The actual authoritative body consists of the elders of IDUMIJE Ebhoyi. Owing to the growth of Eguare in Uromi, it is no surprise that Eguare has no hands in the matter of Onojie title.

Uromi, like Irrua, where the heir is already well and traditionally known during his father's lifetime, has saved herself from succession disputes, by this customary recognition. As a young Prince, third in line of succession, he lives at Uwalor near Oyomo. When his father ascends the throne he moves to Oyomo. Thus by the time his father dies, he is already known by all Uromi and the Kingmakers' duty is only to install him as soon as he has paid his respects to his dead father by performing the burial and Ogbe ceremonies.

It would appear as if Uromi is an exception to the custom of the Osukhure being a member of the Kingmakers. It is only so in appearance for the Onojie's Osukhure in Uromi is the traditional head of the IHOGBE and comes from Ubierumu. The part of Ubierumu from which he hails, was founded by the people of Ebhoyi—DESCENDANTS OF ENIJIE AND PRINCES. Owing to the system of the Princes not living in Eguare, Uromi's kingmakers are bound to be found OUTSIDE Eguare.

4. Installation:

As soon as the Onojie dies, the IBIWELE—the trusted members of the Palace Society, send for the Oniha at Efandion. He at once takes charge of the Palace and assumes the duties of the Onojie. He sends to all the chiefs who collect food and forward same to Eguare for the feeding of the hundreds of women and children in the harem, who otherwise could have been without care during this interim period. A mat is sent for at Uzea (a reason why an Uromi Onojie forbids sitting on a mat at Uzea: Once and once only, and that is before he is buried!); and after the dead body has been washed and all the inner secret ceremonies consisting in the olden days of slaughtering myriads of slaves, have been completed, the body is wrapped with the special mat and buried in the special Burial Bush at Eguare.

The Prince now moves from Oyomo to Idumuewele. He summons his Egbele consisting of the elders of Ebhoyi and announces to them formally the death of his father. Then he can start the burial ceremonies at once, ending with Ogbe. All the ceremonies take him about three

months and all this time he must live at Idumuewele. On the last Rest Day, Edizele, which is a day following Uromi market day, he is subjected to his last insults and labour: he sweeps the village square, climbs a palm tree and he is given three other men to form a Street Watching Team for that day. He arranges for food for his colleagues. Thus he has done all men must normally do in an Ishan community.

Then he returns to the Palace in triumph for the pre-installation ceremonies. These ceremonies consisting of making medicines for the throne and acts of purification of Odugha for the new Ruler, are presided over by the Elders of Idumije. The heir is then blessed by Osukhure who, since Ubierumu moved out of their original ancestral Ijie, is EWELE. After this ILUOBO the actual counting on the throne is done by the ONIHA. He is then the new ONOJIE. His job completed the Oniha in recompense for all his duties during the past three months, steps into the harem, for the last time, and he is given the bewildering joy of making a choice out of the hundreds of beauties in the harem! He then hands the reins of office to the new Onojie. The Onojie who installs the Oniha, is rewarded in a similar manner when a new Oniha assumes office.

5. Genealogical Tree:

Immigrants from Idumoza, B/C, 1460

OGHU (Leader) — ICHESAN (1st. Onojie) 1463

AGBA the Beloved, 1488.

IKẸNOA the Humble, 1504

EHẸNOA

IKHIVABHOJERE

OKUỌYE

AKHIZẸ

IKHIMIGBALE

UWAGBỌ

EDIALE

AKHILỌMẸN

OKOLO, 1873

OKOJIE (OGBIDI), 1901

UWAGBALE, 1944.

6. Comments:

The first thing that strikes any enquirer about the genealogical tree

of Uromi Ruling House is the longevity of the Enijie. Right from ICHESAN, the first Onojie, to the present day, each Onojie with the exception of IKENOA, had lived up to a ripe old age. Ikenoa had powerful brothers who eclipsed him even as Onojie. The psychological effect of this might have shortened his life. But for AGBA the Beloved's challenge to Oba Ozolua, he might have lived much longer, though he might not have merited the honour Uromi pays him even till this day.

AGBA THE BELOVED AND THE UZEA WAR: (1502—1503):

AGBA N'OJIE (1488—1504) was the second Onojie of Uromi. He came to the throne as a sagacious and fearless young man with an obsession: To redeem the unfettered position every leader of his people had before Ewuare's trick brought his father, Ichesan and the other Enijie under the suzerainty of Benin once more! He swore to himself that he would redeem himself and his people from the annoying servitude to the Oba of Benin. Thus as soon as he succeeded his father he began a methodical preparation for a show down with Ewuare's son, the fighting Ozolua. Failing to enlist the sympathy of the rest of the Enijie in Ishan, he decided Uromi was strong enough under his own personal and dauntless leadership, for the battle that would culminate in the reversal of authority. First Agba stopped all the yearly tributes from Uromi to Benin and secondly, laughed to scorn the jelly-like attitude of his brother Enijie who went to pay homage to the son of a Ruler their father had beaten and won freedom from. Had it been another Oba, things could have been bad enough—but this open revolt against an Oba like OZOLUA who developed paralysing cramps when he had no war to fight, bothered on suicide on Agba's part.

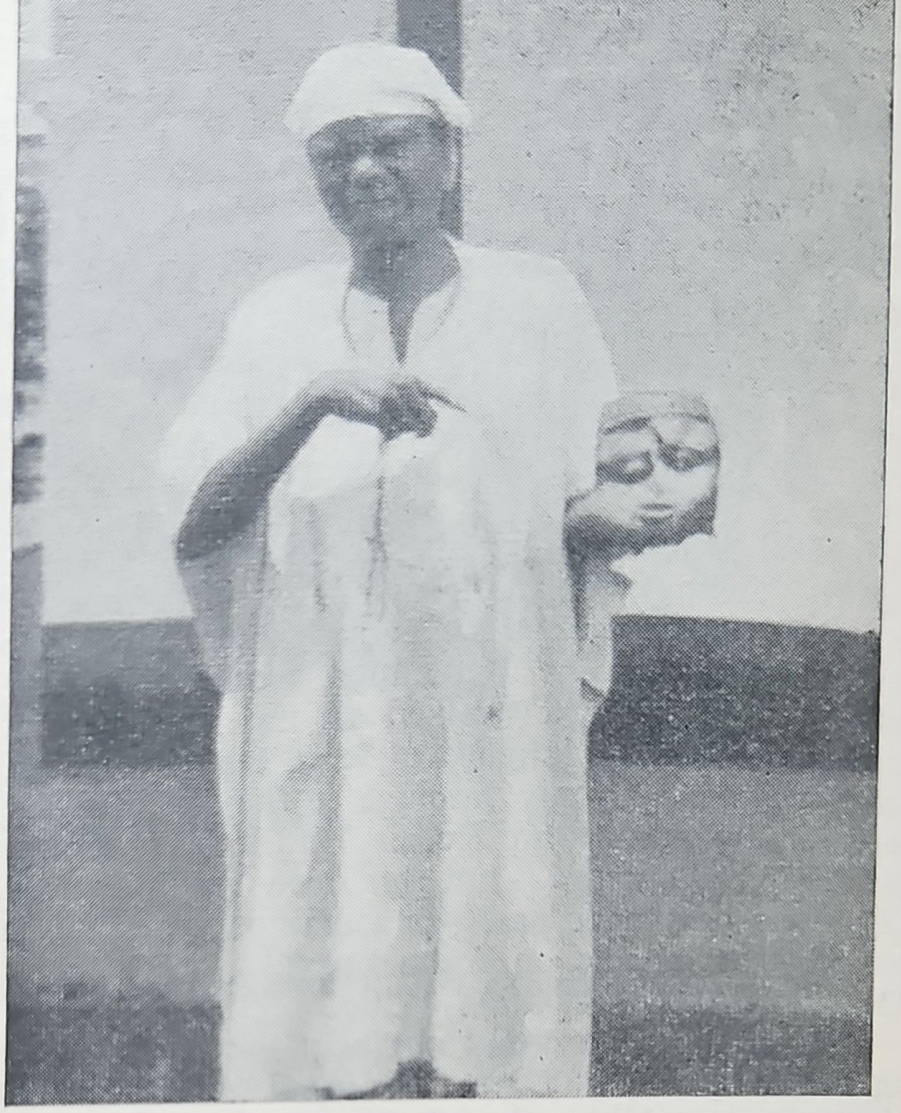
THE UZEA WAR, 1502—1503.

In 1502 Ozolua could not bear the insult any longer and marched on Uromi by way of Uzea. As usual when he marched with his equally blood thirsty soldiers, the inhabitants along the road, fled into the jungle —but at Uzea, the Onojie there who knew Agba's stand offered a resistance. In the battle that followed, the Uzea Ruler was slain and Ozolua made a decree there and then that that was to be the last Onojie in Uzea. The Onojie's head was taken to Benin and cast in brass as a trophy. Agba did not wait for Ozolua to reach Uromi. He called on all his Ekakulo to defend their fatherland.

The indomitable IKHIRIMỌ of Ebhoyi rushed and asked his wife to cook Ema quickly before he went to obey his overlord's summons. He got back to the house to find the yams where he had left them, in desperation ate them, and as he left for battle, he cursed his wife and said that if he returned from that battle it would be goodbye to that obdurate wife—but if he did not, any of his children who worshipped him with food cooked by a woman could be sure of getting one part of his body—his back! Ikhirimo never returned but he was deified and till this day, is worshipped with uncooked food, since all cooking is done by women!

From Ekhue came the thick-necked warrior, IDEDEKPANELE, who thought he alone could face Ozolua's tested men. He was slain where he stood, but was rewarded with deification by his people.

Agba with his valiant fighters armed with poisoned arrows, matchets, cudgels etc., as guns had not been known then, went to meet Ozolua but his attacks were so ferocious and persistent that Agba thought discretion was better part of valour: the great war lord fled to the edge of the Niger at a spot near the present Amalu Ugboha. The leader of the nomadic fishermen there gave him sanctuary but as he sat brooding over his wounded pride, he saw a grasshopper being chased by Driver Ants. Struggling for dear life the insect hopped but landed on the laps



FIRST STAGE OF THE UZEA WAR

The Onojie of Uzea's head was taken to Benin and cast in Brass. Chief Jacob Igharevba holding the replica at the B. N. A. Museum, Benin City.

A WORSHIPPER AT AGBA N'OJIE SHRINE

Ebosele Ehikhebo, aged 27, became the Ohen Agba in 1950 after the death of Okodugha of Efadion.

of Agba, who irritatively seized the cheeky thing and flung it right into the columns of the ants. The man who had given Agba refuge, seeing this, shouted in utter amazement: here was a man pursued by his enemies; he gave him refuge and he was happy; but a terrified insect fleeing from equally ferocious enemies, running to him for protection was flung back to a certain death at the hands of the ants! "Agba" he said, "Pack and leave my house —you deserve no mercy."

Dejectedly Agba found his way to Uromi and Ozolua immediately attacked him with his usual gusto when he had a battle to fight. Whenever Agba made himself scarce, Ozolua unhurriedly and determinedly camped at Uzea, which had become an occupied territory. To him time was nothing as long as it was spent in fighting! Thus for a whole year no farming was possible in Uromi. Men had deserted their homes and were living in the jungle. Packed in hovels and starving, epidemic diseases took heavier toll of the men than were actually lost at the battles. Ozolua, of course, could not maintain his supply line from Benin and his men depended upon the food pillaged from Uromi deserted homes and farms. When these were exhausted they too began to die like flies, not from acts of battles but from inanition and infections.

On both sides everybody except the leaders whose prides were hurt, were tired and sick of the fluid battle. On both sides the followers began to think alike: but for Ozolua and Agba, they could have been home then with their families instead of facing hunger and racking diseases in huts and hide-outs. The warriors on both sides finally got to the comic stage where they could meet on the road or bush and instead of the usual hateful exchange of poisoned arrows, they shook hands and asked if their respective leaders were not yet tired of the stupid situation! Finally the amazing fraternization got to a stage when the more audacious ones summoned a highly secret meeting of the men in immediate command of the warriors on both sides. They met in the jungle and came to the following conclusions:

1. They were tired of war.
2. Their enemies then were the War-mongers Ozolua and Agba.
3. To end the war and get back to their families, these war-mongers must be eliminated.
4. Each side to select four top-ranking and trusted men who would make a sure and hasty despatch of their respective leader and
5. Assembling all the known articles of war and all the jujus known to Benin and Ishan they took a solemn oath to ensure each side carried out its own assigned duties.

The Binis who had not known a stretch of six months peace since Ozolua ascended the Benin Throne about 1480, were the first to act. They did not want to carry the guilt of killing their King and leader on their conscience, so they informed trusted Uzea soldiers that Ozolua always wore a coat of iron so that all arrows and cutlass blows fell harmless on his body. This used to frighten attackers so much that the legend spread far and wide that Ozolua was invulnerable and that by means of powerful medicines, arrows and cutlasses were meaningless as articles of war against him. Thus the sight of Ozolua at the head of his warriors used to make would-be attackers bolt into the bush without a fight.

At sunset Ozolua relieved himself of this heavy burden and took a refreshing bath. That was his weakest hour! Truly on the evening of the day this vital information was conveyed, the warrior undressed and as he was taking his bath, his chief steward, ELAISOLOBI threw a stone over the fence as an agreed signal to his enemies. A man climbed up the fence and as Ozolua looked up, a poisoned arrow landed on his

hairy chest. The great warrior writhed in pain and within a few hours he was a dead man!

As his followers could not carry Ozolua's body to Benin, they cut his head which was sent to Benin City while his body was buried at a spot removed from Uzea for fear of desecration. Some soldiers were stationed to guard the spot and these soldiers were the founders of OTO-KHINMIN in Ugboha, which marked the grave of Ozolua's body.

This done the Benin leaders sent to Uromi that they had fulfilled their own part of the secret agreement. The fearless Agba not knowing that those around him had become worse than open enemies planned his impending attack on Ozolua at Uzea. A few disguised men stepped into his room and took him prisoner. The great leader was led into the bush behind the present Uromi Rest House. They recounted for his information the ills that his lust for war had brought on Uromi; men, for over a year had not been able to farm; they were separated from their homes and families; people were dying like flies from want of food and care, and now, they were sick of war. "Guilty or not guilty?" Agba looked at his most faithful and bravest brothers in arms in a disdainful bewilderment and finally asked, "Are you men mad or have I gone crazy? We couldn't all be sane?" "There you are wrong blood-thirsty Agba," they echoed, "We, like you, are all sane; we are tired of war and you should prepare to die like a man." Their words were as good as their deeds for they then tied up his hands and feet. Then came a hitch, they never foresaw. WHO WAS TO DELIVER THE FATAL BLOW? Oath or no oath, here was their sovereign in fetters, "It won't be me to take the life of a man who had led us all these years!" each man protested. With this racing through each man's mind, they lost their nerves and were prepared to spare Agba's life.

There was a one-handed man amongst them, called AGOBO; he in a quiet tone told the rest to remember the perfidy their weakness was driving them to commit. The great Ozolua was already dead in fulfilment of the solemn oath they took with the Binis. Now for them to cheat them after they had lost their leader would bring everlasting shame on Uromi, not to speak of the fury of the Binis who would be driven to fight to a finish to punish this treachery. He would never be a party to such a chameleonic treachery. "Well said" the warriors commented — "But we maintain history shall not record that we loyal subjects took the life of our dear King!" So saying they disappeared into the jungle one by one leaving their beloved king still agonizingly immobilized, with that single man of integrity. Agobo saw to it at great pains that Uromi's side of the grave agreement was carried out. He returned to his colleagues and told them that he had saved the name of Uromi. This information was received with mixed feelings and sensing that the rest might report him to the uninformed people with a sure torture and death, he fled out of Uromi, to Ugboha, via Uzea, to inform the Binis that Uromi that day, had carried out the terms of the Armistice. Agobo was the originator of IDASUN of Idinegbon, Ugboha.

Many of the top-ranking warriors of Uromi knew that Agba was taken to the particular bush now called AHOJIE but they were not present to know how he died or what Agobo, who was himself a native of IDUMAGBALA, Egbele, did with him, but all they knew was that this strong hearted individual saved the name of Uromi. Had they succeeded in that terrible treachery, the Binis could have fallen upon Uromi with a redoubled strength and immeasurable fury. A few of the immediate and trusted relatives of Agobo in his quarter knew what he had done, and for

long answered the question, "Where is Agba?" with "OVADE!" (He's coming!), hence that quarter got the nickname of IDUMU-OVADE.

With the disappearance of the two great leaders, Ozolua and Agba, from the theatre of war, the two sides wandered about without leaders. The Binis finally went home and Uromi people returned from the bush to rehabilitate and resettle their towns.

A year after the disappearance of Agba, people started talking of him in a nostalgic way. All his faults were forgotten. They said that any ambition he had had was on the long run, to establish the supremacy of Uromi, since the other Enijie were too cowardly to attempt to change the old order of things. So at a big remembrance ceremony, Agba was given a fitting burial by all Uromi and he was deified.

Agba is now a venerable Shrine attended by women and men from all corners of Uromi. The priest is from Ubierumu and the worship, done on Uromi Market Day.

It will be interesting to mention here that Agba's strong feelings against the Oba of his lifetime, had been handed down the line. Uromi Enijie have never had real love for any of the Obas of Benin. What little love there was, had not been nurtured by the bestowing of the Okaijesan Title on the Ojirrua by Oba Akenzua I about 1723!

THE AGBA WORSHIP:

Worship at Agba Shrine takes place every fifth day, on Uromi market day. The Ohen Agba (present one is Ebosele, whose father Ehikhebo was an Ohen-Agba too) arrives at the shrine between 11 and 12 noon. Worshippers, a majority being women, arrive in accordance with the prescription given them by the diviners or native doctors all over Uromi. Some are told that to be pregnant they must go and worship Agba, taking along kolanuts and chalk, or coconut and chalk, a cock and kolanut with chalk etc. Whatever is prescribed kolanuts and chalk must be added. Wine, foufou, dogs, fluted pumpkin etc. may be ordered too. After the worshipper has told the Ohen what she was asked to tell him, which may include how the actual worship may be performed, the gifts are handed over, and holding the Ukhure Agba with his left hand, he recites the blessings, which may be asking Agba N'Ojie to ward off belly-ache, impending sudden death, difficult labour or cure sterility. This done, he rubs white chalk on the outer aspects of both arms and fore-arms and particularly in the case of women, rubs the chest, back and down the abdomen. Some wet chalk is then given to be used by the family at home. Any child or relative who accompanies the recipient of the blessings, is similarly smeared with chalk — the sign of purity or good tidings.

The presents sent are accepted, it's not his place to dictate the quantity or kind or value; the chalk is thrown on the shrine, the kolanuts go into his bag and any palm wine is drunk by the Ohen and his friends who invariably surround him for perquisites; a piece of kolanut is given to the worshipper. And so he goes through the queue which on good business days could be long!

(ii) IKENOA THE HUMBLE:

As a result of the great Agba's influence, pride and the great respect he commanded from his subjects, his sons were abnormally proud Princes. With such a proud father, many did exactly what they liked and some amassed wealth faster than even their father. Thus when Ikenoa ascended the throne about 1504, it was near correct to say that many of his brothers considered themselves Enijie in their new homes at Ebhoyi. The second brother, ONINA who later founded Afuda, was particularly so rich and influential and so commanding in words and deeds that he virtually

eclipsed Ikenoa who ought to be his overlord, but for his humility. All the brothers regarded Onina as the boss and all services which ought to have been rendered unto the Onojie were directed unto the wealthy Onina. Hurt and left lonely in the Palace, Ikenoa brooded over his fate. He at last resolved to punish his brothers who feared Onina more than himself. One day he invited them all with the exception of Onina and his junior brother who could have been too proud to attend in any case. When they were all assembled in a hall in the palace, he locked the door and set fire to the building. His disrespectful brothers were roasted alive.

Hearing this Onina was infuriated and at once organized Uromi against the meek Ikenoa who had been driven to this stern measure by Onina's wicked bluff. The humble Onojie paid all the fines which Uromi inflicted upon him, but Onina said nothing short of an eye for an eye would satisfy him. He and his junior brother, IYỌR, swore that it would be their sacred duty to make the Onojie, their brother, die the same death as he had prescribed for their brothers.

Later a man at Eror committed adultery with one of the Onojie's wives, that is, Ọ HA IGBẸN, a crime punishable by the man being tied up high on a tree near the present Dispensary at Uromi and left to die a slow death, while the woman was shaved, the bare scalp riddled with small incisions, oil was poured on her and with the legs spread out, the feet were pinned to the ground and the woman left alone to die a slow death in shame. If she came from an influential family or was a Princess, her life was bought through the Princes of Ebhoyi and she was banished for life from Uromi.

The Eror man who had misbehaved with Ikenoa's wife knew this would be his fate but either because of the Onojie's meekness or just because he was merely rebelling against Ishan laws, he was unrepentant and nobody seemed to do anything about it. Then an heirless man died at the same village but his property was not sent to the Onojie according to custom. Even angels sometimes lost their temper, and in this case Ikenoa could not keep his: he marched on Eror. After he had gone an informant went to tell Onina that Ikenoa had passed to Eror so he and some helpers hid near the road and on the Onojie's return he was taken captive. Onina tied him up and sent word to Iyor that he had at last got Ikenoa where he wanted him and that he should come down for the satisfaction of their oath—but Iyor had gone to his farm. He had Ikenoa's head shaved, as was done to a condemned man, waiting only for his brother's return before he burnt the Onojie alive.

The helpless and friendless Ikenoa begged Onina to call him his (Onina's) first son to give him water to drink. Onina called out his son's name, "AIGBOJIE, AIGBOJIE!" The boy answered, ran in and Ikenoa begged his brother to call the boy's name again. He obliged with "AIGBOJIE!" and before he could repeat the name Ikenoa interjected, "What of me now?" for the boys name meant ONE DOES NOT HARM HIS KING. This disarmed Onina who then told Ikenoa why he was angry with him. Aigbojie knelt down and implored his father to remember the name he himself had given him and hence he should not kill this one. Onina told his son to remember that he and Iyor had taken a very strong oath to the effect that the first person to get hold of Ikenoa should burn him alive. The sensible boy told his father he was aware of that but suggested that there was a way he could get round that: Since Ikenoa had been shaved he should burn the hair to denote that he had been burnt as arranged. This pleased Onina who did as was suggested and then he set the prisoner free. Aigbojie

then escorted the Onojie home. Immediately, Iyor returned from farm, and he foamed from his mouth when he was told that Ikenoa had been caught but was allowed to go. He seized a matchet and gave a chase —but the Onojie ran into herbalist Ijie's house where the honoured doctor was able to pacify Iyor.

On reaching the palace Ikenoa sent to Oba Esijie making a free gift of Onina's and Iyor's quarters to him!

(iii) OKOLO (1873—1900); AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE WHITE MAN:

Soon after the subjugation of Benin under Oba Ovonramwen in 1897, the white men began to infiltrate into Esan Country. They were led into Uromi by the embittered second son of Okolo, called IYOHA. All he was after was to undo Prince Okojie and straighten his way to Odugha. When Uromi heard of the approach of the white men who had desecrated the OBA they decided to fight for their land like men. Okolo who was lame and by now was quite old, fled and hid at Amedeokhian. Prince Okojie was a courageous and able man but not a warrior. It is true that his thought at least was disinterested in matters relating to war, but when wolves are about the good shepherd must guard his flock, even if he himself does not care for mutton. Thus most of the fighting was under the direction of the active and bold young Prince. Uromi fought bravely for their land, inch by inch, but their first collapse came when Okolo was captured at Amedeokhian and executed there. This very much pained Okojie who redoubled his effort not only to fight for the land of his birth but to avenge the disgraceful end of his great father at the hands of the invaders.

Then ỌNỌKPOGWA, the Ezomo, played a trick on his people. A few days after the execution of Okolo he got the news spread that peace had been made and that all Uromi in hiding in the jungles could then return home. All came out of their hiding and the unsuspecting Prince Okojie was seized with the Iyasere by the white men. They were given a summary trial, found guilty and their beautifully beaded hairs were shaved off before they were led away in chains to serve a year's imprisonment as War Criminals.

With Okolo dead and Prince Okojie gone, Uromi was left without a leader. EBOHON, Ologbosere's brother, who did so much to make the white men's entry into Benin territory impossible and after the forced entry he became their greatest friend and guide, was asked to be in charge. All Uromi knew was that the Prince was gone, probably had suffered the same fate as was meted out to the innocuous Okolo. The only black man then wise in the white man's ways in Uromi was Ebohon; he bled the Princes of Ebhoyi in order to fight for Okojie's redemption from the white men. Goats, oil, money etc., were collected and given to Ebohon, who alone knew that Okojie was not killed but sent to serve a term of a year's imprisonment at Calabar. He pretended to be working hard bargaining hard with the white men and in nine months, Okojie returned via Opoji. He rode into Uromi in triumph on the famous charger, ỌYẸDO, lent to him by the great Imadojiemu of Opoji. All members of the Ruling House in Uromi were deeply indebted to the wise Benin man who all the time, as he bled them, had been muttering to himself, ESAN NE ELAMẸN OHA!

(iv) OKOJIE ALIAS OGBIDI (1901—1918 AND 1931—1944):

As a Prince Okojie was a handsome, alarmingly agile and bold man. Before his father died he had built a name of respect for himself and Uromi. For Uromi he was the best link between the OBA'S WORLD and the White man's Regime. His great and famous life was chequered because of his early inability to adapt himself to the menial position the

white man had reduced our most honoured title — ONOJIE; Ogbidi felt it humiliating to be converted from the lord supreme of all he surveyed in Uromi to the 'Onojie-in-Council'!

As has been seen already, before 1901 he was already a popular and respected Prince. His arrest and deportation to Calabar in 1900 made a martyr of the man who had fought bravely for his fatherland. Thus when he returned in 1901, he found all Uromi at his feet. He first lived at IBHALE'S place at Ebhoyi, while the ruins at the Palace had to be rebuilt.

He then went to Idumuewele and began the customary burial ceremonies before he was installed Onojie towards the close of 1901. He was not new to the position of authority. Knowing his people's admiration for him, he ruled like any of his illustrious predecessors. He was treated with awe at Uromi and outside Uromi and Irrua, men thanked God they were not natives of Uromi. He refused to believe it was stealing, inheriting the property of a man who died without a male child, as his fathers had done since the time of Ichesan. He demanded and of course got a leg of every cow killed at every Burial Ceremony in Uromi, that alone making the buying of meat at the Palace quite unnecessary! Even after the white man had been firmly established at Ubiaja, he continued the lucrative habit of looting all men who had died without heirs: homes, farms, cows and even economic plants, not to mention the proverbial CUTLASS and HOE of the dead man, were removed to Eguare. At this time too the timber industry was just coming into Ishan and men were required to work in shifts of six months for which they got a lump sum of £6. The timber merchants went through the Onojie for labour and thus it became customary that Ogbidi could send men for timber work. Those who did not want to go bought themselves freedom for £6 apiece and those who went returned to thank God and Ogbidi for their safe return by the payment of just £6; he never asked for more!

Abolition of Slave Trade was white man's affair and since he was no white man, Ogbidi indulged in what all lovers of Wilberforce would have classed as degrees of slavery: Only 7 miles from the District Commissioner at Ubiaja, he continued to amass wives by the old system of marriage by seizure. Those in his octopus grip got their release by pledging their daughters, wives or themselves. Despotic Ogbidi, shouting orders and demanding cringing obedience from even his highest aids, punished minor offences with severe terms of imprisonment and meted out to more serious offenders that most ancient and unrepublican of sentences — plundering of the offender's village of origin!

With such terrorist tactics, Uromi people felt they had had enough of Ogbidi: it had become painfully apparent that the martyr of 1901 had become the Nero of 1917! Angry rumblings began to gather from all corners of Uromi, and in 1918, suffering humanity, broken and disillusioned, rose like one man against the erstwhile beloved Onojie.

With so much disaffection, the white men who knew themselves what regards Ogbidi had for their authority, had to deport him to Benin in 1918. Ogbidi at Benin, made very little difference from Ogbidi at Eguare, Uromi. His strong tentacles reached and influenced every major decision at Uromi, so in 1926 he was moved 250 miles further to Ibadan. There he organized a successful escape and he returned to Uromi to cause a stir. Given a chance he could have wrought vengeance with all his usual thoroughness, on all his enemies, right from every Uromi citizen through his son and heir, Uwagbale, to his godson, Okojie of Ugboha who he came to hate so avidly because it was alleged he plotted

with Uwagbale to make his return impossible so that he and Uwagbale could have Uromi and Ishan unto themselves. The quick action of the Government saved everybody concerned. He was arrested and charged with entering Uromi without permission. He was tried and sentenced to three months imprisonment which he served in Benin City before he was sent back to Ibadan, where he remained till August 1931 when he was given a free passage to his native land.

In accordance with Ishan laws and custom, Uwagbale stepped down for his father and returned to Oyomo. By now Ogbidi had not only fully understood the might and cunning of the white man, but had grown older and mellower in wisdom. Though he still commanded a lot of respect and had all the dignity that befitted a Ruler, he only ejaculated, "I am King of Uromi!" in words and no longer in deeds. His last years from 1931 to 1944 brought experience, stability and good government to Uromi. His autocracy was replaced with benevolence and his early greed made good by the indiscriminate spread of joy and happiness to all around him. Till his dying day it is doubtful if he fully forgave the two who were nearest his heart before his troubles in 1918 — Uwagbale and his godson, Chief Okojie of Ugboha. "If thy right hand offends thee, cut it out" was his guiding principle in life, and but for the rigidity of Ishan traditions, he could have cut them both out. Uwagbale, as long as he performed the customary ceremonies owned the throne by right and Chief Okojie had gone to the next world where Ogbidi's might was unknown!

A lot of good things happened during the long lifetime of Ogbidi. Two years after he became Onojie, that is in 1903, the first Native Court which was B Grade, was built at Uromi and this made Uromi become the centre for Ugboha, Ubiaja, Ugbegun, Igueben, Ebelle, Okalo and Irrua which itself did not have its own court until 1905. The Uromi Government School opened in 1906 is only second in age to that at Irrua opened in 1905.

Just before Ogbidi's second exit from Uromi in 1918, a disturbance broke out which necessitated the arrival of a machine gun patrol under Captain Kennedy. The captain's display of the white man's power so impressed Ogbidi and all Uromi agitators that only one harmless shot was fired: the shot went through the 7 to 10 huts that housed the past Enijie at Alu-Ijesan, like a knife through jelly, leaving a clean hole through all the apartments. Turning round the Captain smiled: "That is just one shot and this machine can spit hundreds like that, mowing everything on its way down, before you can blink twice: that includes rioters!"

Direct tax was introduced shortly after Ogbidi left Ishan, in 1920. Men paid 2/- and women, 1/-. In 1927 taxation of women was abandoned and the tax of men rose gradually, leading to the tax agitation of 1931, headed by Uromi. Ogbidi's firm handling of his people was recalled by both the agitators and the British Administrators, who felt that Uwagbale's weakness was responsible for the trouble. The poor man was really in a fix; his people accused him of increasing the tax while the authorities blamed him for lack of control on his people. The final result was that Ogbidi was recalled from Ibadan, once again he entered Uromi in triumph in August 1931.

UKU KHU KU ! GHA AZANAMA !
(Hell ! Here come the Nupes !)

CHAPTER XVII

UGBOHA (3,003)

1. History:

The correct name is OWOHA. Although the population of the district was given as 3,003 in the 1953 census, the more accurate figure is likely to be nearer 5,000 than anything else, for, Eguare, Emaudo, Idumu-Ihaza, Uzogbon, Inemen and Amalu without IDEGUN and Otokhimin, give a population of 4,480.

I have heard people even in Ugboha say that the name OWOHA was given to the area because the people inhabited the hinterland of Ishan, that is OWU-OHA, meaning 'Inside the bush.' I hasten to say that nothing could be further from the truth. Presently we shall see that the name came from the place of origin of the founders.

There is a story that the leaders of the founders of Uromi and Ugboha were brothers. On getting to Uromi the senior brother, wanting to settle in a place that appeared unusually fertile to him, lied to his brother that he was having intense colic which made his further travel impossible; in consequence he was very reluctantly settling where they had stopped for rest. The junior brother could not understand such a sudden illness and feeling very suspicious, he warned his brother to remember there was no drop of water where he was trying to settle, and so urged him to let them move further to a place they could get water. Instead the senior feigned a collapse, and the brother who was being deceived, getting doubly suspicious, said, "Well brother, if this belly-ache from the blues is genuine, I wish you a speedy recovery; but if it is a pretence, may belly-ache haunt you and your descendants for ever!" So saying he left in search of water and so got to the present Ugboha area.

Under the history of Irrua, Uromi and Ubiaja there is a story that the founders of these places were BROTHERS; there was no mention of Ugboha. Till the present day there is an 'AFFINITY' which forbids the 'seeing of blood' between the people of Irrua and Ugboha, and though the elders of both places affirm this, no one has been able to tell me why. Personally, I found no strong tie between the two places until the arrival of Queen Ebuade of Irrua who was a native of Ugboha. Her influence was such that a non-aggression pact between Irrua her legal home and Ugboha her naturally home, did not need formal oath.

In conclusion I have found no real evidence of blood affinity between the people of Ugboha and Uromi but what is a fact is that the people who first inhabited the area today making up Ugboha came from different parts, though ultimately, the original home is Benin.

1. EGUARE (595) AND EMAUDO (790):

The original founders under the leadership of IJIEBỌMẸN, came directly from IDUMU-IGUN Ugboha in Benin City, having the same origin as the people of Agbede, Alegbete and Unemen in Igala district. These immigrants left the City during the disintegration of the great Benin Empire round about 1460. Although they were much impressed with the fertility of the areas through which they trekked as could be judged by the great forests and the dense undergrowths, they trekked further than most of the deserters from Benin because they sought greater inducement to settlement—Water. The result is that this settlement, Ugboha, is full of streams with some of the villages being right on the bank of the Niger and its Eguare is only 8 miles away from this great waterway.

The Binis settled down under their leader Ijiebomen, but in 1463,

Ewuare the Selfish's message to all Ekakulo reached Ijiebomen's settlement. For months before this the Okakulo had been reduced to hopping about on crutches with the soles of his feet riddled with burning Tertiary Yaws nodules. Trekking to Benin was of course unthinkable and so he asked his junior maternal brother ỌNỌR, to deputize for him. Reaching Benin, Onor was one of the ambassadors who had the mixed joy of being made ruler of the district which hitherto, had not been under their influence. They were instructed to conduct themselves from thenceforth honourably, princely and, of course, faithfully to Oba Ewuare. Then they left for their various homes, loaded with bribes consisting of slaves, coral beads etc. Months after, Onor arrived home and his senior brother in ectasy, struggled up to give him a brotherly handshake. Onor with his jaw stuck up into the air in disdain, thrust his right hand into his ẸKPOKHIN (smoked bag every man of importance carried across his shoulders in those days). "Ah!" he said with importance, "Brother, you are making a mistake; You see the Oba has made me the Ruler of our settlement and I would be disgracing this right hand with which I shook the Oba, if I let you have it!" Hurt and swallowing hard, Ijiebomen, said, "But I sent you!" "True," said Onor, "But what you sent me for has been conferred upon me and it is not transferable!"

"Very well" said the much injured Ijiebomen, "You can go and rule your people, but certainly not me!" So Onor removed to a new settlement which is today Eguare. Thus Onor is the founder of the Ruling Family of Ugboha.

Ijiebomen, angry and bitter, was left with his immediate family. He and his children were the founders of the quarters making up EMAUDO:—

(i) IDUMUABEKHAE: Like IDUNZẸNẸBI was founded by OGUN, Ijiebomen's youngest son.
(ii) IDUMU-IYASELE where the Iyasele lives, was founded by Ijiebomen himself as it was the original site; hence it is traditionally first in the Ijiebomen—Onor family.
(iii) AFUDA was an extension of Ijiebomen's settlement.
(iv) IDUENEMA was founded by ENANIẸN, Ijiebomen's first son.
(v) IDUMUOSO was founded by the children of Ijiebomen's daughter called ENOGHỌMAN, who was an Arebhoa; hence they do not attend at the ancestral shrine of Ijiebomen.

When Onor, the Onojie, wanted to worship at the ancestral shrine he invited his senior brother Ijiebomen who retorted that it was an insult for him to go to Onor's place, so he sent his most junior son, Ogun to represent him. This is why the two quarters founded by Ogun, Idumuabekhae and Idunzenebi, became the chief worshippers at the Onojie's ancestral shrine. Customarily, the Onojie in Ishan does not handle the symbol of the departed ancestors, UKHURE, himself. This is done by the Osukhure, who in the case of Ugboha, had to come from Ogun's quarters. When Onor's invitation was refused by Ijiebomen, the latter sent his most junior son Ogun, in spite, to handle the Ukhure which he Ijiebomen ought to be in custody of, but for the trick Ewuare played on Ishan leaders. This was how the custom grew and the most elderly in the two quarters of Ogun, has to be the Onojie's Osukhure.

IDUMUẸGUANỌKOKHUN consists of two quarters:

(a) UHUENKPEN or IDUMUEKPEN which was founded by one of Onojie ABULU'S daughters, and customarily, descending from a female line, this quarter has no say in anything affecting the way of life of the sons of Ijiebomen and Onor.

(b) IDUMUOKHUN was founded by one of the sons of IKHIMIGBALE, who had to be ostracised because he was an albino. This was the fate of all albinos, for although the Ishans did not murder albino babies they did everything possible to make life difficult or impossible for them!

II. INEMEN (1,272):

Round about 1480, during the reign of Onojie IZOYA, IẸLẸN, one of the sons of the great Oghonmighon of Ubiaja, committed adultery with one of his father's wives and as he could not be killed for this grave offence, he was banished. He found his way to Ugboha where Izoya gave him asylum and a place to settle. That settlement became IDUMU-IẸLẸN, the very first settlement of Inemen. Many of the other quarters of Inemen were founded by Binis, many of whom described themselves as Princes. I have no doubt one or two of these were, as evidenced by the fact that the commonest form of salutation by Inemen women is LAMOGUN.

Many Inemen men fled Ugboha during the ravaging and prolonged Kukuruku wars and these men founded settlements at Alegbete and Camps on the western bank of the Niger.

III. UZOGBON (1114):

A majority of the early settlers came from UZOSI or UZANO in Kukuruku district. Here is the traditional seat of the Oniha, who is next in rank to the Onojie.

IV. ỌTỌKHIMIN:

After the death of Oba Ozolua in Uzea in 1504, the tired Bini fighters and the starving Uromi warriors saw no need for further bloodshed. Everybody on both sides was happy to return to his home after the liquidation of the two war-mongers. As the Binis could not take the rapidly decomposing body of Ozolua to Benin, the head was saved and returned to Benin City while the body was taken far into the jungle from Uzea and removed from Uromi, for burial. To prevent desecration a few soldiers were stationed at the spot for day and night guard duty. These soldiers founded the settlement that is today OTOKHIMIN, whose inhabitants, up to the time of the late Okojie who brought them under Ugboha early in the present century, still used the Bini tongue mostly.

V. IDEGUN:

Most of the early settlers here had the same origin as the founders of UZOGBON and up till now, they have the same custom and celebrate the same annual feast.

VI. IDUMU-IHAZA (IDIHAZA), 504:

This place was founded by people from Idumu-abekhae of Emaudo.

VII. IDUMU-ABU:

The founders of this settlement were the very first to settle in the present Ugboha land and were already here before the organized settlement of Ijiebomen. According to custom therefore they are in possession of the big Ukhure for all-Ugboha as a unit, have the prerogative of Oto worship, and since they are first, they in consultation with the Onojie, decide the time for the ẸKẸBHO ANNUAL FESTIVAL which falls round about the FIRST of October. The Ukhure which they take charge of (ISIKUOTO) deals only with Ugboha land and has nothing to do with the Onojie Title.

VIII. IDASUN:

The very settlement here was founded by the dauntless and upright warrior AGOBỌ of IDUMUAGBALA of Uromi. He was one of the top ranking leaders of the Uromi side when the Uzea war got bogged. Agobo was not his real name; his real name is now lost to history. He became

better known with this nickname because he had lost the use of his righ arm from the effects of past battles at which he excelled all others.

Noticing that the information about lovable Agba's death was received with unhidden mixed feelings and fearing that after the Binis had gone, his colleagues might expose him despite their oaths, he fled the Uromi territory. His Eko became the nucleus of the village of IDASUN, where he was later deified for his noble life. His shrine is the yearly meeting place for all men who have done something of great gallantry, for example, killing a leopard, and women who have done something out of the ordinary like bearing twins or triplets that survived.

The people of Idasun even today are noted for their trait: they could always be trusted to carry out their own side of any agreement. They are valiant, full of honour and they handle things with their left hands—a symbol of secret societies and men of valour. Once a year they come to Eguare for the Onojie's celebration of victory—victory of good over evil, uprightness over treachery and life over death in the past year. This is the feast of ISUẸ ẸFALE. It is performed on the day of the new moon and from thence, the Ekebho Ukpe is due in another lunar month.

KILLING OF A LEOPARD

The custom surrounding the killing of a leopard in Ugboha emphasises the noble position of Idasun. The killing of this animal is one of the greatest acts of valour in Ishan and in Ugboha in particular, it places the man in a special rank of distinguished men. Such a man is accompanied with a War Dance and the great beast is carried on men's heads like a corpse. No matter his village of origin, the gallant man must go first to Idasun, the village of the Brave and its men accompany him to Eguare for recognition. After the ceremonial dance the man is rewarded for his bravery and the leopard is taken to Idumekpen of Idueguanokokhun for butchering. Next morning the Skin, the heart and the Nine whiskers are brought to the Onojie. In the olden days the heart was used for making sasswood poison which was more potent in Eguare. The flesh was not actually meant for eating, but bits of it were shared round the villages and every child who had not tasted it before was given a bit, thus protecting him against the severe reaction which is believed would follow accidental swallowing of any material with which the leopard might have touched, for example, a thirsty hunter drinking from a water hole from which a leopard might have had a drink. This belief is not superstitious in that modern medicine has proved that severe anaphylactoid reactions could follow the ingestion of materials from cats, leopards, flowers etc.

EKEBHO is the group name for the villages of Eguare, Emaudo and IDUNEGBON consisting of Idihaza, Idumabu and Idasun.

As said already the Onojie's Osukhure is found in the quarters of Idumuabekhae and Idunzenebi. The Ezomo is found in Idumu-Iyasele, the Uwague, Oshodi and the Egbe, which was one of the 'personal titles' like the Ehi were titles traditionally found in Idumuabekhae while the Ehi was found in Afuda.

IX. AKAMARU (205):

During the Nupe or Bida war which some call Kukuruku War, that really consisted of a series of dare-devil raids by the Nupes, between 1847 and 1850, the people of Inemen village bore the brunt of these overt slave raids. In one big swoop round about 1850, a majority of Inemen community made for the bush and as fugitives, landed on the right bank of the Alika. They formed the early settlers of Alegbete. ADEDE was then the Onojie of Ugboha.

THE UDAGE—EGUARE WAR, 1894

As a result of these devastating raids the word NUPE or AZA-

NAMAN became so terrifying that warned men fled their village even before a shot was fired. Even as late as the early twenties, naughty children could be brought into immediate control with the cry GHA AZANAMA! (Here comes the Nupes!)

Shortly after EBADAN, OLUMESE'S heir, had completed the burial ceremonies and ascended the throne, UDAGE buttressed with the notoriety of the Nupes, arrived Ugboha via Inemen with Nupe and some Benin mercenaries. Many Inemen people remembering the havoc these raiders had wrought on Inemen in particular, years before, fled without resistance or actual battle reaching them. Udage's objective really was Eguare which he and his predatory helpers attacked with the utmost fury, raising it down when the Onojie and nearly all Eguare took to their heels.

One of the men who fled Ugboha during the raid was AMALU, a native of OYỌMỌ quarter of Inemen, who crossed over to IFEKU Island. Soon he fell ill seriously and the Ighanlan host, fearing he might die, shoved him into a canoe and landed him on Ishan bank of the Alika. There ill and hungry he got a message to reach the Onojie of Alegbete through passing canoe men. Help really came by way of men to take him to Alegbete, but finding him too ill to be moved, they built a hut for him and after some days when he had got better they left him with food supply. When he had fully recovered, even though he had heard that Ebadan and a majority of those who had fled Ugboha had returned to their homes, he refused to go back. On the contrary his junior brother called UKPOKOLO and many others from IDUMU-AKUBỌ of Inemen went to join him and soon a hamlet grew. It was called EKO AMALU which for shot degenerated into EKAMALU or with the Ugboha inflection, AKAMALU.

Round about 1902, some Ilushi and Ighanlan traders under Chief ATỌKHARA, began to come to the new village to sell fish, Okpi-Ighanlan (Carved calabashes) etc., and thus EKI AMALU took origin. With the arrival of the UAC and the John Holts round about 1906 the river port soon became an important produce buying station for places as far as Irrua.

With such a rapid growth in importance Amalu's settlement soon became a strong bone of contention between the people of Alegbete and Ugboha. By 1907, matters came to a head and at the Ilushi Enquiry of March 26th, 1907, Chief Okojie who had become Onojie of Ugboha a year earlier, claimed not only Ekamaru but ALEGBETE which he maintained was uninhabited before the Nupe or Bida War of 1847—1850. Then it was that refugees from Ugboha founded Alegbete that was later claiming Ekamaru! Okojie, flanked by such dignified men like the audacious OTUMU and AKHUEMOKHAN, put up such a strong case against the Alegbetes led by Chief IJESAME, that the District Commissioner H. M. Douglas, decided that Ekamaru belonged to Ugboha. The boundary between Ugboha and Alegbete was then fixed to be the UHỌNMORỌ Stream.

On the 4th of November 1918 AMARU became a Crown Land, Chief OKOJIE, Onojie of Ugboha being the Grantor under the title of Absolute Grant.

IFEKU ISLAND (1,098):

This long island lying between the River Niger (Ohimile) and the Alika, was uninhabited until the Idah siege of 1515—1516 by Oba Esigie. Many Idah people fled Idah town southwards, some founding settlements on the Ifeku or Iheku Island. The incessant molestation of the areas south of Idah by slave raiders of Bida, scattered the inhabitants of such

places as ẸKKWẸLE (Ekperi), Alegbete and Inemen Ugboha. Many of the fugitives helped to establish settlements on the island too.

As the settlements fused, the island came to consist of mixed groups of Ighanlan (Igala), Nupes, Ugboha and Ekperi people and the territory itself was being claimed by Chief Okojie of Ugboha, Ugbodaga of Alegbete, Ikhanoba of Ekperi and the Atah of Idah. Again Chief Okojie put up such a strong case based on the history of origin of the island community that at a joint meeting at which Chief Okojie, Chief Ugbodaga and some Igala chiefs led by Chief Uchola, were present, Mr. Shute, then an Assistant District Officer at Idah, went into the dispute in conjunction with Mr. Falk, later a Resident, Benin Province, on the 16th of April, 1916. The safest way to peace was for the Officers to divide the island into two: the northern half which was predominantly Ighanlan speaking, was placed under Ugbodaga while the southern part from a point opposite Ekamaru to Ojigolo (Ilushi), was placed under Ugboha since it was practically inhabited by Ugboha people. Thus while the northern part attended Court at Fugar the southern part went to Court at Ubiaja! But the final separation did not come until 1923 when the north joined Kukuruku Division while the south became definitely Ishan territory.

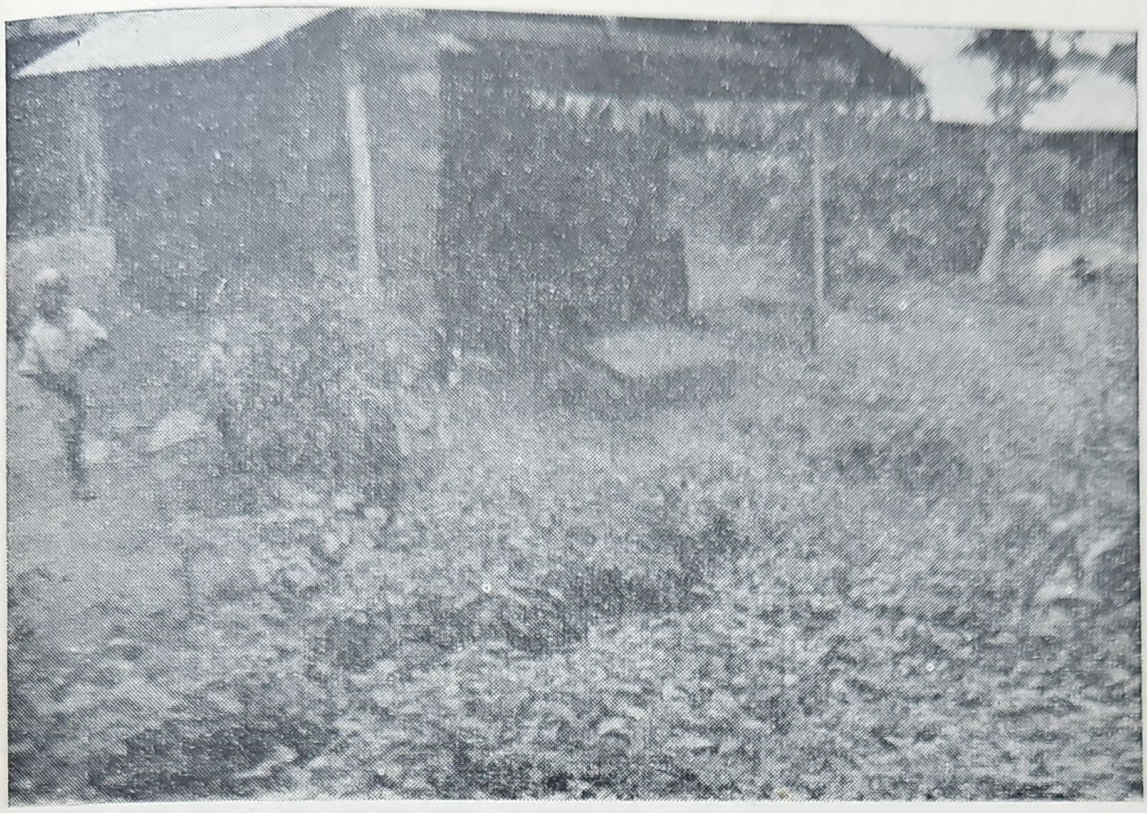
ENOWE THE CONQUEROR, 1461—1516:

The great Enowe is the one big link between the people of Ugboha and Igueben in Ishan and Idumu-Igun Ugboha in Benin City. He was born by parents who were members of the organized emigrants from Idumu-Igun Ugboha when the great Benin City cracked under the strains of Ewuare the Selfish. That was about a year after the settlement of Ijiebomen and his party.

As a young man Enowe soon made a name for himself and the Ruling Family of Ugboha, for he excelled everybody else in the three great arts of medicine, blacksmithry and war. In and around Ugboha his cleverness as a Blacksmith brought him as much fame as his bravery had done.

After Ewuare had conquered the emigrants by appeasement, he was in a position to hear of all that went on in his once again, vast domain and like the greedy man he was, he wanted the very best of everything for himself or under his control. Thus he snatched the best magicians, herbalists, artists and warriors exactly as he looted people's property. Enowe was already earmarked as such a loot when death claimed Ewuare in 1473. Thus early in the reign of Ozolua, one of the three Ewuare successors, Enowe was invited to Benin City round about 1481. At Benin in fitting with Ozolua's constant thirst for war, Enowe demonstrated his prowess in battles and by the time Esigie came on the throne he had become commander of the Royal Troops and led the Oba's forces from victory to victory. Thus in 1504 he helped Oba Esigie achieve a decisive victory at the Udo War, and was one of the pivots of the Benin Army that made the Attah sue for peace during the Idah War of 1515—1516. At the Idah War his valour so impressed the great Eben who later founded Igueben, that he had tried to get him settle at his Idumigun, Igueben.

By this time he had made his ancestral home of Idumu-Igun Ughoha his home and could not return to Ishan. He lived and died in Benin City and at his death which occurred shortly after the Idah War Victory Celebrations of August 1516, it was only fitting to deify him in the three places of his association — Ugboha in Ishan, where he was born, Igueben which was founded by his great admirer Eben, and at Idumu-Igun Ugboha of Benin City where he lived and died, and which was also Eben's place of origin. All the blacksmiths both in Ugboha Ishan and Ugboha Benin



THE SPOT WHERE THE GREAT ENOWE LIVED AND DIED
This ramshackle hut today marks Enowe's House at IDUMU-IGUN Ugboha, Benin City.

Chief Jacob Igharevba holding the battle Armlet of Enowe the Conqueror. The great Warrior's size can be gauged from the great width of the Bangle.

City are known as the children of Enowe.

The people of Ugboha and Igueben are wont to exclaim "Enowe N'Ojie!" This must be understood to mean that while Enowe was never an Onojie, he lived and moved as the honoured favourite of OBAS and Enijie. Through the advice and influence of Enowe another Okakulo called OJIEMỌDU was snatched from Ugboha to swell Oba Esigie's Brave Men.

2. Kingmakers:

The kingmakers of Ugboha are the elders of Eguare and Emaudo. As a result of the original seniority of Ijiebomen who founded Emaudo, over Onor, founder of Eguare, Emaudo is the senior of the Kingmakers' Quarters. No matter the age of the Odionwele of Eguare he cannot be senior to that of Emaudo because of this same reason.

In Emaudo itself there are two quarters that hold position of significance; they are Idumuabekhae and Idunzenebi, the two quarters founded by Ogun the son who represented the most senior man at the original ancestral worship of the first Onojie, Onor. Till this day they still hold this unique position amongst the Kingmakers of Ugboha. The Osukhure who plays such a vital role in the selection and installation of a new Onojie, must come from these two quarters. Whoever is the senior of the elders of the two places automatically becomes the custodian of the Onojie's ancestral shrine.

To complete the picture, it will be mentioned again that the elders of Idumoso and Idumekpen who descended from female lines have no connections with the Kingmakers.

3. The Installation:

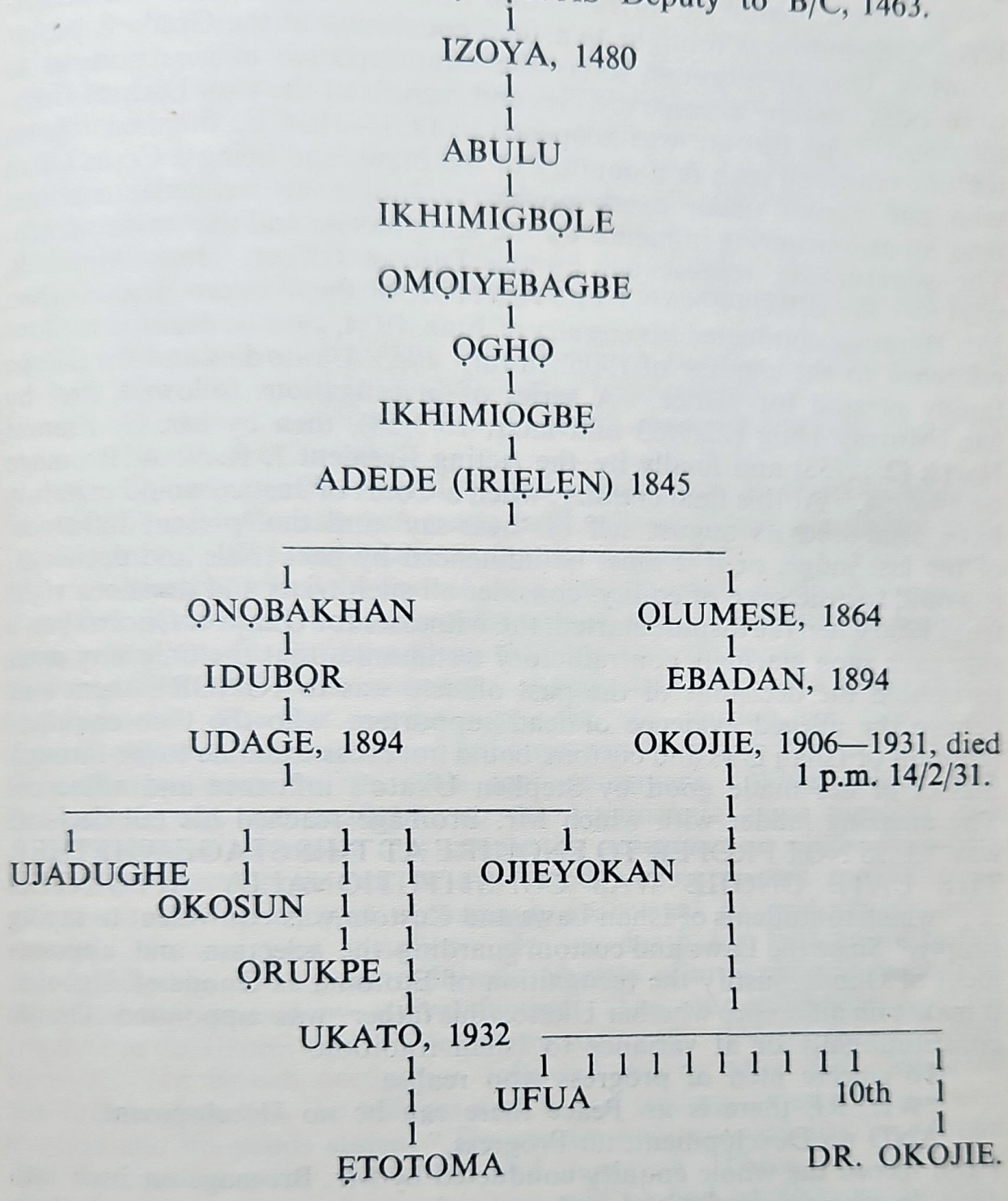
The method of installation in Ugboha is in strict accordance with Laws 3 and 4 of the basic laws governing selection and installation of Enijie in Ishan. Ugboha custom has no room for the self deception of THE THRONE IS NEVER VACANT. When the heir is yet making himself eligible by performing the all-important Burial Ceremonies, the Oniha takes the place of the Onojie at the palace, so that it is the corruption of modern times which tries to deny the Oniha of his hereditary functions, that makes the heir assume a position he is not yet qualified to hold, under cover of THE THRONE IS NEVER VACANT. Pure and unyielding Ishan custom is NO INSTALLATION UNTIL AFTER THE BURIAL CEREMONIES.

Thus when the Onojie dies the heir begins the burial ceremonies at once and when he has finished, usually the vital parts are over in about seven days, he is ready for installation as Onojie.

The kingmakers are sent for and the principal actors are the Osukhure, the Odionwele of Eguare and the Oniha, who since the Onojie's death has been living and doing the duties of the Onojie. First, blessings at the ancestral shrine by the Osukhure (Iluobo). Then the new man is installed by counting him on the inner Ojukhuo with the Oniha, the Odionwele and the Osukhure propping up his arms.

4. Genealogical Tree:

Immigrants from Idumu-Igun Ugboha, B/C under the leadership of IJIEBỌMẸN who sent ỌNỌR AS Deputy to B/C, 1463.



5. Comments:

The genealogical tree of Ugboha Ruling House is bifid and will unfortunately be so to the utter detriment of the town until the Kingmakers see the selfless wisdom of sticking to Ishan Native Laws and custom guarding the selection, appointment and installation of Onojie. From the time Onor was installed the first Onojie in 1463 by Oba Ewuare the Selfish to the time of ADEDE who some call IRIELEN, the Ruling Family was peacefully intact. Trouble started from Adede's House.

Several times since 1906 the dispute has found itself in the melting pots of British official investigations and enquiries and I cannot see TRUTH AND JUSTICE crystallizing in any crucible until government officials realise that they are only sowing seeds of discord, perpetual fued, hate and suspicion which is only too apparent in Ugboha today, NINETY YEARS AFTER ADEDE'S DEATH, by the inherent British attitude of "the man on the spot being always right" and each succeeding officer thinking his sacred duty is to uphold the decisions of his predecessor, who like himself, was entirely ignorant of the custom, tradition and laws

of the people over whose destiny he presides.

In 1906 a protracted investigation into the OLUMESE—ONOBA-KHAN dispute was brought to a final conclusion at the Grade B Native Court of Uromi, although today the administrative officers pretend to have been unable to trace the files and records of the then District Commissioner. The dispute was reopened in 1931—1934 by Stephen Ukato, the one educated man in a country of the blind, and being a Court Clerk who had served under every powerful Onojie, he weilded something near an awe-inspiring influence on the Kingmakers and the townspeople. The government, represented by the District Officer, Hugo Marshall, who was the LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR of the Western Region when Mr. Bromage conducted his enquiry of June, 1954, gave its decision without reference to the enquiry of 1906. In July 1953, Ukato died and the Okojie family pressed for justice. A series of investigations followed, first by Mr. Murray Haig (22/9/53 and later, 10/3/54), then by Mr. G. Francis Harris (2/12/53) and finally by the Acting Resident J. R. V. A. Bromage on 14/6/54. At this final enquiry, when a Court of Justice would certainly have disabused its august self of 'hear-say' and the 'present influence' of the last judge, or if it must be influenced by past trials and decisions, it would for the sake of equity, consider all such trials and decisions right from 1906 when the dispute started, the witnesses for Ukato or Onobakhan's side gave such glaringly contradictory testimonies that the only way open to uphold the decisions of the past officers was to IGNORE them and believe the alleged evidence of dead supporters who the then enquirer, ignorant of Ishan laws and custom, could not cross-examine to see through masses of lies made good by Stephen Ukato's influence and affluence. The amazing ladder with which Mr. Bromage reached his tall decision was "IT IS NOT PROPER TO ENQUIRE AT THIS STAGE WHETHER THE LATE ONOJIE WAS CONSTITUTIONALLY APPOINTED . . ." which to students of Ishan Laws and Custom,was equivalent to saying simply, "Since the Laws and custom guarding the selection and appointment of Onojie, justify the recognition of Etotoma as Onojie of Ugboha, it makes no difference whether Ukato, his father was appointed Onojie constitutionally or at variance to Ishan tradition.

To sincere men of progress who realise
"WHERE there is no Peace there can be no Development,
AND no Development, no Progress,"

I will record the whole enquiry conducted by Mr. Bromage on June 14th 1954, leaving the reader and such men of progress to appreciate the hate and disunity in Ugboha today.

AN ENQUIRY HELD IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 2 (2) OF THE APPOINTMENT AND DEPOSITION OF CHIEFS ORDINANCE
by J. R. V. A. Bromage, Esqr., on June 14th, 1954.

Representing UFUA the petitioner — Dr. C. G. Okojie.
Representing Etotoma UKATO the respondent — Chief Iyasere.

Dr. Okojie on behalf of petitioner submits in evidence a letter written to the District Officer, Ishan Division, on August 26th., 1953 (I.D.132/27).

Dr. Okojie sworn by affirmation in English states the Onojieship of Ugboha is a constitutional monarchy controlled by traditional custom. Any matter concerning it is decided by a certain section of the townspeople called kingmakers. There are two quarters constituting the

kingmakers by name Emaudo and Eguare. In Emaudo proper two quarters are of vital significance, Idumuabekhae and Idunzenebi. The elders of these quarters are also of importance. The most elderly of the Idumuabekhae and Idunzenebi is the Osukhure. He is the traditional worshipper at the ancestral shrine of the Onojie and custodian of all our traditions. On the Eguare side the most elderly man is the Odionwele. In the question of appointment the Osukhure of Emaudo and the Odionwele of Eguare are the heads of all those who are entitled to have a say. In making a decision they are guided by Native Laws and Custom. Seven of these laws are of special importance.

(1) The title is hereditary.
(2) The first surviving son succeeds the father.
(3) There is no question of succession until due burial of the late Onojie.
(4) He who performs this burial inherits the family property and the title. This is of over-riding importance.
(5) Wherever an Onojie dies his body must be brought home to Eguare for burial.
(6) Once a man has been installed nothing but death removes him.
(7) The Onojie title being one held in trust is not a personal property. It is held in trust for the community. It cannot therefore be willed in favour of a son, brother, uncle or friend.

These laws apply throughout Ishan and are not peculiar to Ugboha alone. The Okojie family admits that the two disputed sides are descendants from the same ancestor. Adede had two sons Onobakhan and Olumese. The first son developed leprosy during the lifetime of Adede. He was ostracised and a house was built for him in the bush. He ceased to come to the town and see anyone. When Adede died Onobakhan was not available, so the kingmakers came together and said, "This is a ceremony that cannot be postponed as unless it is performed no new Onojie can be appointed." The second son Olumese who was able-bodied was accordingly instructed to perform the ceremonies. He was then installed. On his death his first son Ebadan was installed according to tradition. Shortly afterwards war came and the place was sacked by a rival faction. The Onojie Ebadan and his family fled to Uromi and his followers scattered. Udage then installed himself. The British occupation followed shortly after this. Some of the British settled in the villages and began trading. One of them was waylaid and his goods stolen. The matter was reported and the Onojie was then found guilty, sentenced and deported. There was jubilation when he was deported, because it was said he had no right to the title. The District Commissioner came and asked the people for a ruler. He was told that Udage was not the right man, but Ebadan. As Ebadan was dead his first son Okojie was produced. He was installed in 1906. On Okojie's death in 1931, Ufua his eldest son performed the burial ceremonies, but before installation Stephen Ukato, who had been a clerk to the Courts of all the most important Enijie, who in turn constituted the Ishan Council, a man of wealth and affluence and perhaps the most educated man in the town, instituted a dispute. His claims were full of fallacies, but he was installed and recognized by the government. While the dispute was then on, Stephen Ukato saw the importance of the burial ceremonies. He saw that burial was the principal factor in deciding the right to the title. He came home and he buried his father. But he revealed his designs by not only burying his father. He also buried his grandfather Idubor and his great grandfather Onobakhan. In fact Idubor and Onobakhan could not have become Onojie unless they had performed burial ceremonies. In 1931 Stephen Ukato

was the third son of Udage; yet he was allowed to bury his father, while his two elder brothers were alive and healthy. It was said that the senior brother had voluntarily relinquished the title to his brother. If there was a grave reason for Okosun not being Onojie, it was for the king-makers to decide who was next in succession. In fact he obtained his position by his influence in the town. It was said that in 1906 when Udage was deported Okojie was brought in as a regent; but Udage at that time had four grown up sons, the fourth Stephen Ukato was also educated. Yet all these were brushed aside in favour of Okojie on the other side. In Uromi the late Okojie was sentenced in 1918 and deported to Ibadan. His son succeeded him, but on his return in 1931 stepped down again in his father's favour. In the same way Stephen Ukato was sentenced in 1939 to eighteen months imprisonment. While he was away Chief Iyasere deputized for him. Udage on the other hand was allowed to come back after a few years and remained in Ugboha as a commoner until 1924 when he died while Okojie continued as Onojie. This proves that Okojie was Onojie in his own right and was not acting on behalf of Udage. All three, Udage, Idubor and Onobakhan died and were buried in the village. If they had been Enijie they should have been buried in the official place Eguare. The Okojie family maintains that Olumese buried his father Adede, Ebadan buried Olumese, Okojie buried Ebadan and Ufua buried Okojie and therefore Ufua is the right person to inherit the Onojieship.

OJOTU THE OSUKHURE OF UGBOHA sworn on juju in Ishan states: Adede was alive when Onabakhan was attacked with leprosy and isolated. Adede died when Onabakhan was in the bush. He was buried in the bush and the body was not brought home. Emaudo and Eguare were consulted and asked Olumese to bury his father. On Olumese's death Ebadan performed the burial and became Onojie. A year later he was driven out by war and fled to Uromi. Udage became the Onojie in his stead. When Ebadan died Okojie buried him. When Okojie died Ufua performed the burial. During the chieftaincy dispute many people voted by hand for Stephen Ukato; accordingly he performed the burial ceremonies for his three ancestors. He killed a cow for his father and a male and female goat for each of his grandfather and great grandfather. An Onojie must be buried in Eguare. In this house were buried Adede, Olumese, Ebadan and Okojie.

Cross-examination by respondent: When it was suggested that Etotoma be put on the Onojie's seat, I was annoyed and went away. I was not present.

Re-examined: During the enquiry in 1931 the kingmakers were not allowed to speak; but a decision was reached by popular vote. Stephen Ukato performed Udage's burial ceremony. Stephen Ukato had two brothers alive at the time, Okosun and Orukpe. This is not in accordance with custom. According to custom the first son buries his father. A grandson does not bury his grandfather. It was during the burial ceremony of Stephen Ukato that it was suggested that Etotoma be installed. No Onojie can be installed until burial ceremonies have been completed.

THE ODIONWELE OF EGUARE: Sworn on juju in Ishan: I am senior grandson of the late Adede. Olumese was my father. Adede was father of both Onobakhan and Olumese. When Onobakhan died it was Olumese who performed the burial ceremony of Adede and became Onojie. When Olumese died Ebadan performed the ceremony. When Ebadan died Okojie performed the burial. When Okojie died Ufua performed the ceremony. The performance of the burial ceremony is the most important factor in the recognition of an Onojie. The reason

Olumese was asked to perform the burial ceremony of Adede was that Onobakhan had died. Onobakhan had been sick and it was because of this sickness that Olumese performed the ceremony.

OKOIDEGUN: Sworn on juju in Ishan: Onobakhan and Olumese had the same father. Onobakhan was attacked by a bad disease and was isolated in the bush. He was in the bush when he was informed that his father was dead. Before three months Onobakhan himself died in the bush, but no one knew of it. When Onobakhan died the family asked Olumese to perform the burial ceremony of his father. Olumese performed the ceremony and became the Onojie. When Olumese died Ebadan performed the ceremony as did Okojie and Ufua in turn for their fathers. They were buried in Eguare the official place. Idubor did not perform ceremonies for Onobakhan nor did he bring his body from the bush. Udage never brought Idubor for burial. The late Udage did not become Onojie by right, but obtained it by force. If Udage had been the rightful Onojie, his grown up son should properly have acted for him. When the British came the Onojieship was given to Okojie, because he had performed the burial ceremonies which entitled him to it. At that time the Ugboha people said that the rightful owners had recovered their property. The place where Stephen Ukato built his house is farmland and not the proper site for the Onojie to have his house. My quarter is Idumuabekhae. I am one of the elders of the kingmakers.

CASE FOR THE PETITIONER

CHIEF IYASERE SWORN BY AFFIRMATION IN ISHAN: I wonder that this matter has been brought up again. It was enquired into about twenty-two years ago. The officer who enquired into it visited every village and met the old men in their houses and questioned them. The Odionwele at that time was called Uwaifo. We were playing outside his house when the officer came to question him. When the officer left we went to ask the old man the reason why the officer came to question him. He told us that the officer had come to question him about the Onojieship, as has also been done in the case of Okojie's dispute with Udage. Uwaifo told us that Ukato's side were the rightful people for the Onojieship. Uwaifo said that one Ijiebomen was the one who gave the Onojieship to Onor, his younger brother, and Onor was father of Adede. I am one of Ijiebomen's family, who transferred the Onojieship to Onor. If the dispute in the Onor family continues, we will have to transfer the Onojieship back to ourselves. As the late Onojie Stephen Ukato is dead, Etomato is the rightful man to be Onojie.

Cross-examined by Dr. Okojie: After Oniha I am third in rank to the Onojie. I do not know that Onor was the first Onojie. All I know is that Ijiebomen gave the title to Onor. In Ishan custom it is not incorrect by native law and custom for a son to bury a grandfather if he has the money to do so. It is not incorrect for an officer enquiring into the Onojieship to enquire from the public as well as from the kingmakers. The eldest son of the Iyasere could accede to the title even if he had not performed the burial ceremonies. If the eldest son of an Onojie dies before his father, it is possible for the grandson to succeed and if a minor, it is possible for someone else to act as regent. The eldest son inherits property, whether he performs the burial or not. If Ukato buries Udage and Etotoma buries Ukato, then Etotoma rather than a younger brother of Ukato will be entitled to the Onojieship.

OJEYOKAN SWORN ON JUJU IN ISHAN STATES: I am the son of Udage and the younger brother of the late Onojie. This dispute was the subject of an enquiry more than twenty years ago. The people who gave evi-

dence at that time knew that the Onojieship belonged to my grandfather Onobakhan. The statement that Onobakhan was a leper was false. Onobakhan being the eldest son buried Adede. Olumese did not perform the ceremony. When Onobakhan died Idubor was a minor and Olumese was made regent. When Idubor grew up he asked that his position of Onojie be given to him; but Olumese refused. This refusal continued until Olumese died. After Olumese died Idubor became Onojie. Ebadan was never at any time Onojie. Dr. Okojie did not know Udage; but I knew his grandfather Ebadan. I remember when Ebadan died. He was not buried in Eguare, but in his house at Okokhunoke. Idubor, Onobakhan and Udage were all buried in Eguare. My father was alive when Ebadan died and it was not possible for Ebadan to be buried in Eguare, when my father was still alive. The Onojieship is the right of our side of the family. Dr. Okojie has nine senior brothers, who have not raised this matter. A thorough enquiry on this dispute has been carried out before and the Onojieship was given to us. During the previous dispute Ufua said that he would give up his claim if Ukato swore juju. When Ukato swore the juju Ufua gave up. After the decision of the Governor Ufua was sentenced to three months imprisonment for continuing this dispute and warned that if he continued he would be given seven years. All the elders including the two who gave evidence for the petitioner joined to install Etotoma on the Onojie's death. Egbe and Oniha are the two people entitled by custom to install the Onojie. This has been done in the case of Etotoma and he has been accepted by the elders. Ojotu is not among the edion of Emaudo village. He is one of the Igene age grade. One Ikekhedu is the Osukhure of Ugboha. There is also another Osukhure by name Akaireneme. I agree with the first, second and sixth of Dr. Okojie's statements of Native Law and Custom. I do not agree to the third, fourth, fifth and seventh.

Cross-examined: The Egbe title was a man buried with the Onojie, when he died. Though Etotoma was in fact installed after his father's burial ceremony was performed, he would have been able to have performed the burial ceremonies after his installation, if he had been prevented from doing so before. A commoner may require an Onojie to swear juju if there was a dispute. I have never heard of this happening before. Where an Onojie is living is known as Ẹguare. When Udage died Okojie was Onojie; but his house was not Ẹguare because Okojie was only regent. The old Eguare was uninhabited and had become bush. When Udage died Okojie was living in Idumueguare. Idumueguare is the same as Eguare. My late father was at Uzogbon village when he died. We carried his body to Eguare to bury him. We did not move the actual body. We got a rope and measured the grave round. We then remeasured the grave at Eguare and performed the ceremony. By re-measuring the grave the tradition is fulfilled. In this sense it is correct to say that an Onojie must be buried in Eguare. Ukato performed the burial ceremonies for Onobakhan, Idubor and Udage. Even if Ukato had not buried his father Etotoma still would have been entitled to claim the Onojieship. Ukato was given preference to Okosun in the title because Okosun gave way to him. It is the burial ceremony performed by Etotoma that has entitled him to the Onojie over himself Ojieyokan the brother of the deceased. The senior son is the one who perform the burial ceremonies. Okosun actually performed the burial ceremony; but Ukato produced the animals and the offerings. Idubor was Onojie. He was recognized by Eguare. During the 1931 enquiry the Edion agreed that Idubor had been recognized by Eguare.

IGBERAISE THE ODIONWELE OF UGBOHA SWORN ON JUJU IN ISHAN STATES: The Osukhure is in Idumabu village. Ojotu is not Osukhure. I

did not know Onobakhan. Ebadan was not Onojie. He performed the burial for Olumese though he was not Onojie. Ufua also performed the burial of Okojie. In the same year that he did this Ukato performed the burial of Udage. During the burial the Idunzenebi were with Ukato and I was with Ufua burying Okojie. At that time Uwaifo was the Odionwele as I am today. During the burial I questioned who was the senior among the persons making the burial. He answered Ukato. We have now installed Etotoma as Onojie and I greet him. I am one of the kingmakers. The others are Ojotu, Aikwemelo, Irabor, Akharia, Aikhomu, Aikareneme, and some younger people who may accompany us. Two of us carry the Onojie by the arms. I carry him by the waist and we take him to the seat. After that no one should dispute it with him again.

Cross-examined: The title of Onojieship is hereditary. The eldest son should succeed his father. The eldest son performs the burial; but someone else can supply the materials. When Ukato died I would have agreed to the second son performing the burial instead of Etotoma the eldest. If the second son performed the ceremony he should be the Onojie, because he has performed the ceremony. I do not remember saying before the District Officer that Olumese performed the burial ceremonies for Adede. The kingmakers are all found in Emaudo and Eguare quarters. Oniha is not Eguare but Uzogbon. Etotoma was installed after the burial ceremonies had been performed. This was correct custom. Idumuokhun village is also entitled with the other villages to provide kingmakers.

IKEKHEDU SWORN ON JUJU IN ISHAN: Supported by Adaghebalu, Akharia, Orukpe, Aikhomu, Oko and Oniha from different quarters. I come from Idumabu village. If the eldest son has money he can perform burial ceremonies at once and be installed. If he has no money he can be installed Onojie and perform the ceremonies afterwards. I was not present at the burial ceremonies of Okojie. I was however present at that of Ukato. I used to perform yearly ceremonies for the late Okojie. I did the same for Udage. When Udage was arrested and deposed in 1907, it was considered proper for Okojie to act as regent. Since that time Okojie was allowed to be Onojie and looked after Ugboha. Udage returned two or three years after. He asked to be accepted as Onojie as before, but Okojie refused. After this Udage returned to his mother's village Uzogbon. Udage died at Uzogbon. When Okojie died the Ugboha people said it would be best for Ukato to be Onojie, because it belonged to them originally. When Ukato died recently Etotoma performed all the ceremonies and was installed. He gave us a fee of £10.

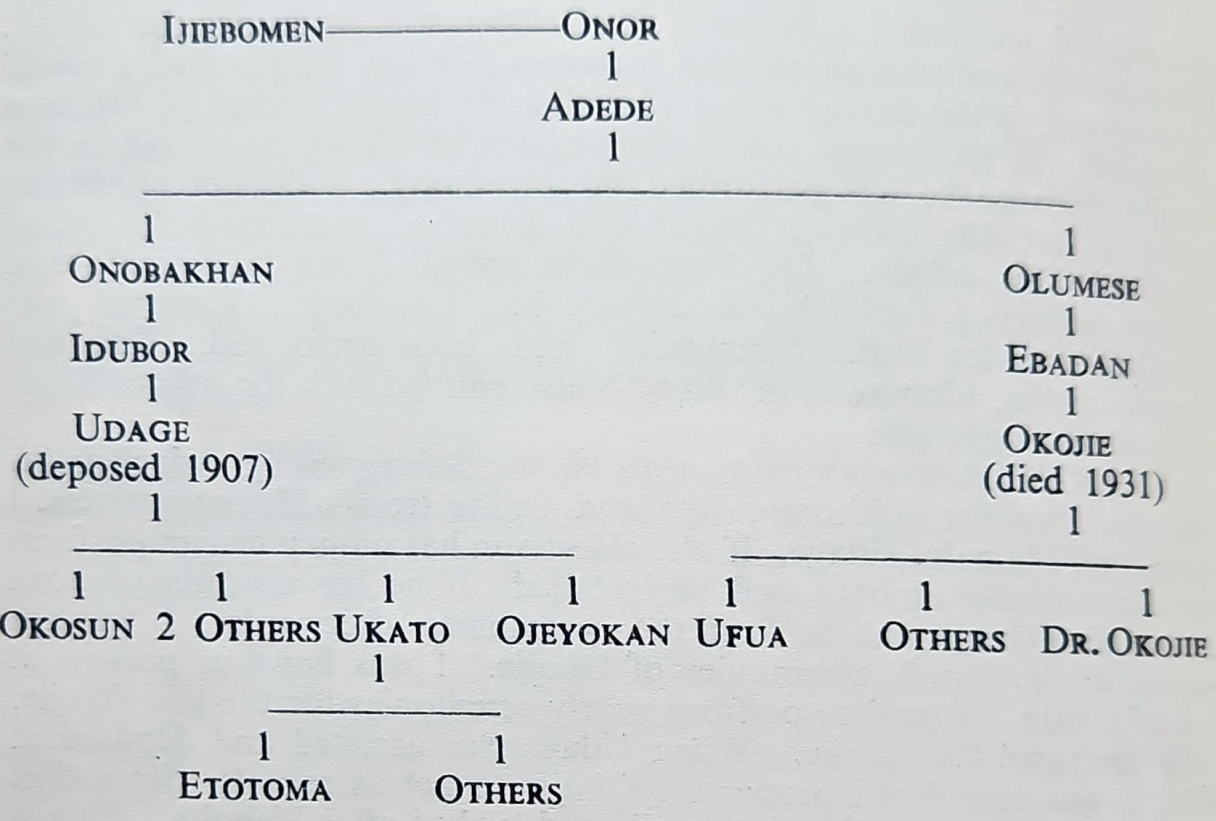
Cross-examination: The eldest son of an Onojie is responsible for burying his father. If the second son was very rich and wanted to perform the ceremonies I as a kingmaker would agree provided the eldest son was willing. After Etotoma had performed the burial ceremonies I would not agree to another brother being installed as Onojie. He who performs the burial ceremonies inherits the family property and title. The eldest son may be acknowledged as Onojie though he has no means to perform all the burial ceremonies. He may then perform the burial ceremonies later, and will then be installed properly. I was not present when Ukato performed the ceremonies of his father and grandfathers and I do not know about them.

ONIHA OF UZOGBON SWORN ON JUJU IN ISHAN: I was given the title of Oniha by the late Onojie Ukato. It is my duty to announce when Onojie dies. I was at home and was sent for when the late Onojie died. When I arrived the family reported to me and according to custom I reported the death to the Onojie's wives. After informing the wives I sat down in the Onojie's house and Etotoma told one Ojeiyokan to

give me presents. I was told to wait fourteen days in the house. I am only sent for if a recognized Onojie dies and Ukato was a recognized Onojie. I took Etotoma by the hand and took him to the Onojie's seat. Then I went home.

FINDINGS: (ALL CAPITALS — AUTHOR'S)

The object of this enquiry is to decide whether the appointment of Etotoma as Onojie of Ugboha had been made in accordance with Native Laws and custom. The petitioner claims that the appointment has not been properly made ON THE GROUND THAT ETOTOMA'S FATHER WAS NOT PROPERLY APPOINTED and that Ufua petitioner's elder brother is the right man to be Onojie. To understand the relationship of the parties the following genealogy is shown:—



2. When Okojie died in 1931 the succession to the title was disputed between Stephen Ukato and Ufua. As a result of the petition from Ufua the dispute was investigated by the District Officer who reported as follows (see B.P. 778/1):—

"Onobakhan succeeded Adede. Onobakhan's son Idubor was a minor and his uncle Olumese acted as regent. When Idubor attained his majority Olumese refused to retire and the matter was taken before the Oba of Benin. Before any decision was given Olumese ran away and after the deputation had returned to Ugboha he also returned. The result was that the town was split. EGUARE QUARTER RECOGNIZING OLUMESE AND THE REMAINDER OF THE TOWN IDUBOR. Idubor died before Olumese and for the rest of the latter's life he was Onojie. When Olumese died there was a full town meeting and Udage was recognized as the proper Onojie. UDAGE WAS DEPOSED BY THE DISTRICT OFFICER IN 1907 (?) for criminal practices and Okojie installed as Regent. Udage died some 5 or 6 years ago AT UBIAJA and Okojie continued as Onojie. THE RECORD IN THE OFFICE GIVE NO INFORMATION AT ALL AND THE ABOVE IS BASED ON WHAT I ELICITED AT THE MEETING."

The District Officer held a meeting in Ugboha Town in August 1931, and again reported (B.P. 778/1):

"4. The town is divided into four quarters and I called the elders from the three others first. Out of eight elders and four titled men all were supporters of OKOSUN except one who said he did not know. I then took Eguare and called the elders from each of the four sub-quarters. From Ufua's own sub-quarter Idumu-Eguare I called the eight senior elders. The senior and the sixth supported him, the senior being his great-uncle. The other four stated definitely that OKOSUN WAS THE RIGHT MAN. In two other sub-quarters five elders, one being the senior elder of all Ugboha, SUPPORTED OKOSUN. In the fourth sub-quarter the three elders said Udage, father of Okosun, was the proper Onojie but that he had been deposed, Okojie put in BY THE GOVERNMENT, AND WHOEVER THE GOVERNMENT PUT IN NOW THEY WOULD OBEY."

THE DISTRICT OFFICER ALSO REPORTED THAT OKOSUN HAD ASKED TO RELINQUISH HIS CLAIM IN FAVOUR OF HIS YOUNGER BROTHER STEPHEN UKATO. The appointment of Stephen Ukato was consequently confirmed by the Resident (B.P. 26/1931 of 26/8/31).

3. In May 1931 Okosun took action against Ufua in the ISHAN DISTRICT COUNCIL for the recovery of certain properties of office i.e. 12 strings of Ivie bead, ada and Ebelen and 2 elephant tusks. Judgment was given for the plaintiff.

4. In January 1932 Ufua was convicted and sentenced in ISHAN DISTRICT COUNCIL to one year I.H.L. for conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace. The sentence was reduced by the District Officer on review to six months and confirmed by the Resident. (Case No. 9/31).

5. In May 1934 Ufua petitioned the Resident for the return of the Ada and requested permission to summons certain persons for bringing false evidence against him in the previous case. The Resident refused to order the return of the Ada.

6. Ufua then sent a petition to the Governor reiterating his claim to be Onojie. His Excellency however declined to interfere.

7. The arguments put forward by the petitioner in this case are in effect the same as those put forward in 1934. They are:—

(1) That Okojie was descended by direct line of Enijie from Adede and that Udage was a usurper.

(2) That it was not in order for OKOSUN TO GIVE WAY TO STEPHEN UKATO HIS YOUNGER BROTHER.

The District Officer's findings on the first point have already been given. It may be noted however that there was no mention in the 1931 and 1934 petitions of Onobakhan being a leper. With regard to the second point the District Officer had two comments, first THAT THE ARGUMENT COULD ONLY OPERATE IN FAVOUR OF OKOSUN and not in favour of Ufua, and secondly, that there was a PRECEDENT AT EWU WHERE ON THE DEATH OF IKANWAN, OGIEFO SUCCEEDED, ALTHOUGH HIS ELDER BROTHER ABURIME WAS ALIVE. (The Onojie referred to is EHIEMUAN and the reader is kindly referred to the section on Ewu, page 205—Ehiemuan The Tyrant).

8. The petitioner in his evidence set out seven principles which have to be observed in the selection of an Onojie. They are:—

(1) The title is hereditary.

(2) The first surviving son succeeds the father.

(3) There is no question of succession until the burial of the late Onojie.

(4) He who performs the burial ceremonies inherits the family

property and the title. This is of over-riding importance.

(5) Wherever an Onojie dies the body must be brought home to his Eguare for burial.

(6) Once a man has been installed nothing but death removes him.

(7) The Onojie title being one held in trust is not a personal property. It is held in trust for the community. It cannot, therefore, be willed in favour of a son, a brother, or a friend.

The petitioner has made very careful and detailed studies of Ishan custom and may be regarded as an expert. I do not FEEL THAT I AM IN A POSITION TO CONTRADICT HIM AND FROM THE EVIDENCE OF THE WITNESSES I AM SATISFIED THAT HIS PRINCIPLES ARE SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT. The petitioner is, however, one of the parties in this case and I believe he has over-emphasised some of the principles he has stated. Native Law and Custom is unwritten. IN THE OLDEN DAYS PRECEDENTS WERE FEW BEING LIMITED TO A SMALL NUMBER OF GENERATIONS AND TO NEIGHBOURING CLANS. Custom has therefore to be broad and exceptional circumstances had to be dealt with ad hoc as they arose. Unlike modern law, Native Law and Custom could not provide for all contingencies and a certain amount of latitude was, therefore, bound to be given in difficult decisions. With this reservation I am prepared to accept the petitioner's principles.

9. As I have stated already the object of this enquiry is to decide whether Etotoma has been properly appointed in accordance with Native Law and Custom. IT IS NOT PROPER TO ENQUIRE AT THIS STAGE WHETHER THE LATE ONOJIE WAS CONSTITUTIONALLY APPOINTED, especially as this was the subject of a detailed enquiry twenty-three years ago. In any case it would be most unlikely that a fresh enquiry of the old dispute could bring to light any new evidence. The original dispute which divided the town was between Olumese and Idubor. THIS IS NOW A LONG TIME AGO and the evidence is twenty-three years older and therefore twenty-three years less reliable than that submitted to the first enquiry.

10. Turning to the appointment of Etotoma I find that he fulfilled all the conditions laid down by the petitioner. He is the eldest son of the late Onojie. He has performed the burial ceremonies and he has been properly installed. I therefore find that the appointment of Etotoma as Onojie of Ugboha has BEEN MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIVE LAW AND CUSTOM.

J. R. BROMAGE,
Acting Resident, Benin Province.

At Ugboha, June 23, 1954.

EPILOGUE

AND now arises a question — "WHERE does the Okojie Family go from here?" Whatever their motive force may be it will be kind to remind them that since the introduction of the Chieftaincy Dispute (Preclusion) Ordinance, an aggrieved contestant can no longer seek justice in a Court of Law. Appeal now lies from the District Officer to the Resident and then to the Governor. And that brings this Family up against the impregnable wall of a fetish — THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE MAN ON THE SPOT!

But Truth has no weight—submerged, it must rise! Truth has no age—it is eternal and indestructible. Truth in 1906 remains as bright in 1931 as in 1954. Kingmakers all over Ishan and students of Constitutional History may take the Ugboha Enquiry of June 1954 as an isolated affair—but I warn them that it strikes deep into the core of Precedence—though I hear omnious rumblings of the Onojie Title going the way of all flesh like the Onojie's Executioners, the Egbe and Ehi Titles, and, in its place, emerges the pale and strange face of the Appointed President of the Native Court and the Elected Chairman of the Council!

CHAPTER XVIII

ORIA (1,101)

1. History:

Correctly Oria consists of two small districts — UKHUOLO or ORIA with a population of 1,101 and ONOGHOLO which has a population of 289. Ukhuolo the original settlement consists of three quarters: Eguare, Igo and Ugbokpa. The land on which Oria proper settled was Ugboha, but while Ukhuolo paid tributes to the Onojie of Uromi, Onogholo paid to Ubiaja.

There is a version of the history of Oria which I have refused to accept not because it is highly uncomplimentary to the people of Oria but because I have failed after a prolonged research both here and in Benin to get supporting evidence.

It is said that after the Idah War, on the way back, the Oba of Benin PURIFIED his body with some slaves just as it is customarily done in Ishan by women using a few days old chicken. From this the name ORIA is said to have come. (RIA EGBEA means to cleanse the body). The people thus used, wandered on until they came to Uromi but the Onojie, fearing to harbour the people the Oba had so used for his person, refused to give them sanctuary. So they wandered on till they came to Ugboha where the Onojie, pitying their condition, went to hide them in the jungle, where they multiplied under the protection of the Onojie of Ugboha.

The only support for this story is the word ORIA, which came to eclipse the original name, UKHUOLO. There are two glaring fallacies in the story. First if the Oba used them to cleanse his body he would not want to see them forever and so he would not care where they wandered or what ultimately happened to them in this or the next world, just as a woman throws the chick used for purification at the OGBIODIN and let it wander unto its death. Thus any Onojie harbouring these unlucky people would be committing no particular offence against the Oba. Secondly all through the history right from Agba, the second Onojie of Uromi to modern times, there has never been real enthusiastic love between the Oba and the Ruler of Uromi, as exists between the Oba and the Ojirrua, for instance. The attitude of the Onojie of Uromi, the largest single unit of Ishan, has been that of suppressed defiance. Thus the Onojie of Uromi could have had no qualms swelling the number of his subjects by taking in the wanderers from Benin.

Both in Ugboha and Uromi it is undisputed that there were several people that came to found the first settlement in Oria. It is therefore unlikely that the Oba would have used so many slaves at the same time no matter the thickness of the impurities he had collected on his royal person during the Idah War!

To silence the people — most of whom are young and vindictive men, spreading this story built round the word ORIA, probably to embarrass and hurt opponents with origin from Oria, the Oba who fought the Idah War was Esigie, eleven years after he succeeded his warring father, Ozolua, who was killed in Uzea which by then was already a flourishing chiefdom with an Onojie.

The correct history of Oria is closely tied up with Uzea which was founded long before 1460, when the Ruling Houses of Uromi, Ugboha and Ubiaja respectively left Idumuoza, Idumu-Igun Ugboha and Udo in Benin. The first settlers in Oria came from Uzea and not from Benin and were already far from Benin City when Esigie fought the Idah War.

EGINLIN, a grandson of Asukpodudu of Uzea, was the founder of Oria. When Agba challenged the authority of Oba Ozolua in 1503, the first trial of strength did not take place in Benin City or Uromi but in unfortunate Uzea. The Onojie was killed, the Ruling House exterminated, and, of course, Uzea took to the trees and the jungle. A party led by the warrior Eginlin, roamed the forest heading south-east via the present UROH to reach Ugboha. The Onojie showed them a place a few miles away to live. Some of the more timid ones passed on to found settlements in EBU area.

Eginlin later had the following sons who, spreading, founded other places. The first son was Okomẹkpẹn who later founded UGBOKPA. The second son, ỌNỌGHOERANLAN, founded ONOGHOLO. Another son EKPẸANE, founded Igo. Eginlin's original settlement, by virtue of the superiority of the founder, became the Eguare.

Truth to tell, with powerful grabbers sitting on the thrones of neighbouring districts of Ugboha, Ubiaja and Uromi, Onojie title was unknown in Oria. It is a modern innovation calculated perhaps to enhance the superiority of Ukhuolo over Onogholo or vice versa.

Non-Aggression Pacts:

People of Oria were strongly forbidden the sight of blood flowing in the veins of inhabitants of Uzea, Uromi, Unea of Irrua, Ekwei or Ekperi and Ebu. It is strictly not ALL Uromi but Ohonsi's or Egbele's Otoegbele. All the places named were descendants of same origin. The peaceful relation with Ugboha followed Okoven.

CHAPTER XIX

UBIAJA (Pop. 9,896)

1. History:

The correct name is UBIAZA.

Many stories have been built round the origin of this name. Some say that the party that headed for the present Esan territory during Oba Ewuare the Selfish's impositions was led by three Ekakulo who later founded the Ruling Houses of Irrua, Uromi and Ubiaza and that these three war leaders were brothers. At Alu-Otoegbele where they rested and shared their property, the most junior brother committed adultery with one of the wives of the most senior brother; this caused him a great shame. The two seniors called him, gave him his share, telling him "Depart from us!" (BIA NỌLE KHA KHIỌN ỌSỌNI!) which literally means "Push him that way!" and from this came the name UBIAZA.

If this story were true we could have grown up to find a stronger tie of brotherhood and a non-aggression pact between Irrua, Uromi and Ubiaja, but if any race saw the blood of Uromi with infinite relish it was Irrua: Eguare Ubiaja could have been at Oyomo Ubiaja today but for the indiscriminate use of the matchet and poisoned arrows by Uromi warriors on Ubiaja!

On the contrary, even today, the close and brotherly association of Ubiaja and Udo is evident everywhere and it has withstood years of struggle for power and importance and political reorganizations of modern times. Why ?

The answer is to be found in the origin of the two places. The founders of the two places hailed from UDO-ARUARAN in Benin. In fact they were two maternal brothers — the founder of Udo called Ijesan being senior to the founder of Ubiaja whose name was ẸDẸ. Ijesan whose nickname was IZIBI was one of the treasurers of Oba Ewuare the Selfish, just after the great City had cracked up under Ewuare's despotism, nepotism and avarice. A more trusted servant than Ijesan was hard to find and so he was allowed to go in and out of the great house of treasure unquestioned, until one day while he was talking to someone, his junior brother, EDE which is the short form of ẸDẸI-KHỌLỌ, who had followed him to the palace and unable to resist the sight of the treasures, helped himself with what he considered a grain in a desert of sand, mere chicken feed! But the Oba, particularly Ewuare, when it concerned money, had many eyes! Ijesan was immediately summoned before the Oba who soon found that his trusted treasurer was absolutely innocent. Stealing an Oba's property was quite a serious offence punishable by death. In Benin and Ishan, when a man has committed a serious offence the expression is ỌGBU UBI. In this case Ede had 'GBU UBI,' and the particular UBI was that of AZA (Treasury). Hence ỌGBU UBI AZA-A (He has committed the serious crime of robbing at the treasury).

Well the punishment for this was death but Ewuare for the love of Ijesan could not kill Ede, so he ordered his immediate banishment: he had to wander into the jungle instead of staying with his senior brother, who curbing his greed, could enrich himself at the Oba's pleasure. Accompanied by his immediate relatives he naturally followed the direction of those who recently had left the City and thus found himself in the area today called ESAN.

When asked why he deserted the City for the unknown and unkind jungle, he confessed that he GBU UBI AZA-A, and so he came to be

referred to as ỌNỌ GBU UBI AZA-A, which for short came to be UBI AZA!

Soon his senior brother Ijesan began to grow unhappy over the fate of his junior brother Ede. He set out to find his whereabouts. He later found him at the primitive settlement of IWEALA—now quite a happy ruler of his small surrounding, away from the oppressions and the nerve-racking fear of the Oba. Obviously he was not thinking of ever going back to Benin, so he stayed with him awhile until he found his newly acquired arrogance and insolence too much for a senior brother. So he moved to IKEKẸDẸ (Over-side of a River). Ijesan's original settlement grew to bear the name of his home in Benin — UDO.

Thus both Udo and Ubiaja were founded by two full brothers. The custom of Udo breaking kolanuts in a mixed gathering of Udo and Ubiaja people can now be appreciated. Similarly an enquirer can now understand why Udo and Ubiaja adhered strictly under all provocations, to the principle of 'Never seeing each other's blood!'

EDEIKHOLO had two sons of note: the first was OJIERỌMỌN and ỌGHỌMIGHỌN, the second. Ojieromon grew to be the undaunted war leader of his father's settlement at Iweala, but in 1463 when Oba Ewuare wanted to trap his recalcitrant subjects by appeasement, he invited all the Ekakulo in the area around Benin, merely "for the formal burying of the hatchet and recognition as heads of their various communities" Since he created the title Onojie and installed them, he again succeeded in bringing the rebels under his suzerainty. A few and sagacious ones amongst the leaders saw what Ewuare was after; Ojieromon, already sore at the Oba who had banished his father from his home, and now head of a community serving him as subjects, felt he was only less than the Oba, by degrees. To show his spite he sent his junior brother OGHOMIGHON. Ewuare, the smart politician, saw the implications of this and struck his now famous stroke which had the selfishness and love of power of men as its main impetus: The Onojie title, which was bestowed on those who attended the Oba's court, made them rulers of their communities and subservient only to the Oba and above all, this noble title was NOT TRANSFERABLE to father, brother or master, and once an Onojie always an Onojie until death!

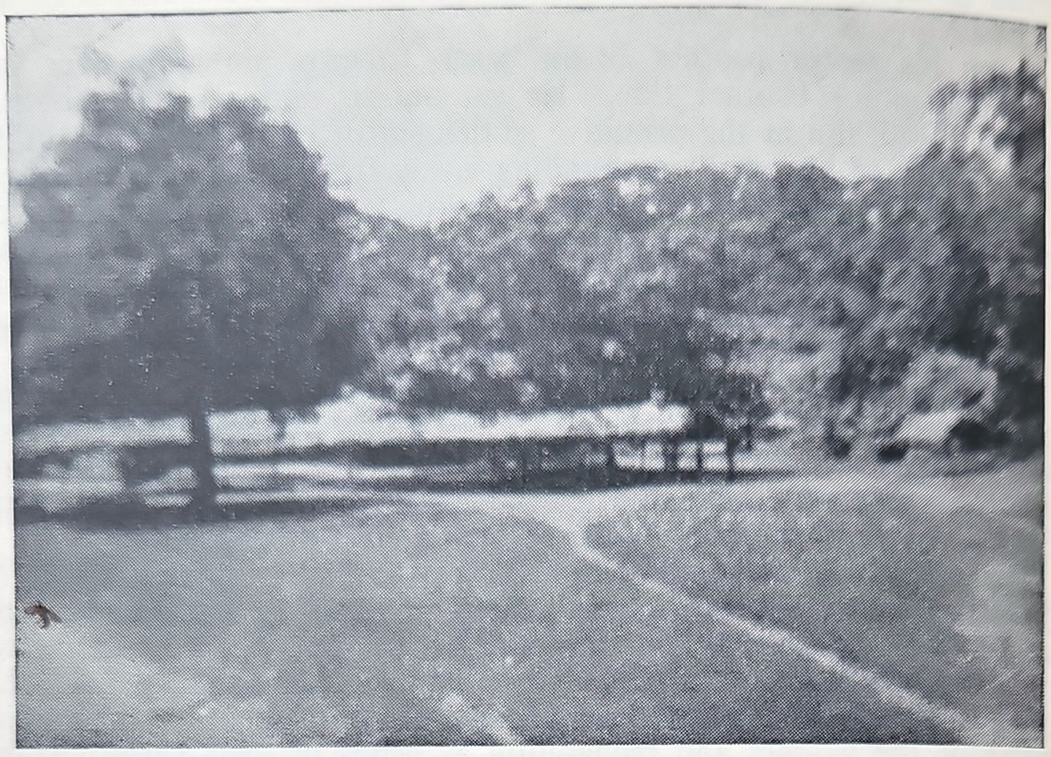
Everywhere a proxy had been sent hate and strife followed, which was exactly what Ewuare wanted. When people fight amongst themselves they do not only forget their common enemy but get so weakened that reassembling to face the enemy is irreparably made difficult. If Ewuare were a prophet he could not have planned the confusion that befell Ojieromon's Iweala better. When Oghomighon returned from Benin his senior brother in unbounded joy, stretched out a brotherly hand of welcome, which Oghomighon ignored in a way a slave owner putting his property in his place, could have envied! In a few dignified words hissed through his clenched teeth, he told his brother of the new re-alignment of authority!

Thus shifted the seat of government from Ojieromon's IDUMU-ẸBỌ, which he had to found in his anger, to the settlement Oghomighon founded when the separation occurred.

The remaining link suggesting oneness of Eguare and Idumebo is the fact that intermarriage between Ojieromon's Idumu-ebo and Oghomighon's ruling quarter — Eguare — is strictly forbidden by custom.

WHY AN ONOJIE IS BURIED IN AHIA

The first settlement of ẸDẸ NỌ GBU UBIAZA-A, and founder of Ubiaja, was at a place that is today IWEALA in AHIA. When Ojeiromon had left, a disappointed man, to live quietly at a new settle-



IWEALA QUARTER— AHIA: The first settlement of Edeikholo. In the foreground is the path leading to the village market.

ALU IHIANLOTO ODERIE IN OYOMO UBIAJA.

ISHAN WAR DRUMS

When they sounded no one's head was safe on his shoulders! Their sounds were so frequent that OYOMO became too hot for the Ubiaja Ruling Family.

ment that became IDUMU-ẸBỌ or IDUMẸBỌ, this original settlement in IWEALA became the Eguare of the new monarch, Oghomighon. When the Ruling Family fled as a result of the EMU—Ubiaja War, Oghomighon founded a new settlement at the present Oyomo, Ubiaja. But the incessant attacks of Uromi warriors made him and his subjects feel that they were better off near Emu, so they shifted to the present Eguare, and nearer the settlement of Ojieromon. The whereabouts of the IHI-ANLOTO ODERIE is today still traceable and till date female members of the Ruling Family are buried at UTE in Oyomo.

When the Ruling Family left Ahia for Oyomo some of the early Enijie were buried in Oyomo. In olden Ishan the most important part of a man was the head—hence the Head Hunters! The sure sign of victory over an enemy was to come home with the enemy's head, hanging from an OJOMẸN string. If one returned from a retaliatory expedition minus the head of the enemy, no one would take him seriously. For an Onojie therefore the loss of the head was a great shame generally on his subjects.

During the early history of Ubiaja Ruling Family at Oyomo, the then Enijie were buried at the then Eguare which Oyomo had become, but on several occasions enemies and wicked medicine men from Uromi often desecrated the Royal Burial Grounds, stealing the Royal heads! To guard against this national insult, on an Onojie's death, people of Ahia—the ancestral settlement and Eguare, used to come for the body which they carried through a tortuous path across Ugboha road to Ahia. Nobody in Eguare was allowed to know the exact spot where the Onojie was buried. As an extra precaution, if the head had not already fallen off the body during the three months stages of mummification, the dead ruler had to be decapitated and the head buried separately and most secretly with only the highest men of Iweala knowing where that was.

THE NAME AHIA:

Several stories were given for the origin of the name AHIA, but all point to the same thing: that Ede's original settlement did not have this over-all name until the Emu—Ubiaja War. Strictly speaking when the Ubiaja Ruling Family was here the place occupied by IDUMU-OGWA of IKEKEN was the IKEKOGBE of Eguare. Emu, aided and led by the matchet-happy Onojie of Orowa, fought and sacked the inhabitants of Iweala, and getting to the settlement to find it deserted, the Orowa warrior, now covered in blood, scraped off the blood clots from his body. He then asked for water as they looked around, and with this he washed his bloody hands. Where he scraped the stains off his body became AHIA (HIA-HIA LEA = SCRAPE IT), and where he washed his hands — ABỌARANLẸN (ABỌ ARANLẸN).

As used today the name AHIA covers the old IWEALA, Aboaranlen and OBEIZE.

By immigration Ubiaja began to grow and today, it consists of:—

1. EGUARE: Had the same origin as the Ruling Family. Together with the Government Station which was opened in 1906, it now has a population of 6,716.

2. UGBENI: One of the junior brothers of Oghomighon The Great was an avid elephant hunter, the love of this dangerous sport taking his real name from him. He founded this settlement.

3. OYOMO was the left over after Uromi sacked the Ruling Family and made its members shift to the present Eguare. The party of hardy men who chose to remain behind was headed by UWAGBỌR, Oghomighon's brave second son. The original palace site is marked by the ALU IHIANLOTỌ ODẸRIẸ or the original harem.

4. IDUMUỌWEMEN was founded by valiant Ọwemẹn, one of Oghomighon's sons.

These four villages form the ẸGBẸLE-NENẸN which is the Ruling Family and constitute the Kingmakers of Ubiaja.

5. ORUEN-ONIHA (213):

One of Oghomighon's junior brothers became the first Oniha while most of his subjects were immigrants from Uromi.

6. UWOKHA (231):

A majority of the founders came from Uromi while others came from Ora.

7. IDUMUOHALEN (305):

Many of the first settlers came from Ugboha and were related to Agobo's IDASUN.

8. IDUMEHAN:

This settlement was founded by some men who had left UKHUOLO ORIA in protest and were making for Uromi when at Ubiaja they were bribed to stay. They settled as a body, serving the Onojie of Ubiaja through their leader, EHAN, whose successor today is still referred to as OJIE NA KHỌKHỌ (Not a king but his representative).

9. IDUMU-OSHODIN:

The founders were from Ojieromon's Idumebo. Thus Ohen Ojieromon can be appointed from this quarter too. Since the creation of the Onojie title, the first settlement in Ubiaja proper was that of Idumebo, founded by Ijieromon in anger. It is therefore their prerogative to do the OTO Worship, but the actual family for this office moved with the group that broke away from Idumebo to found the new quarter of Idumu-Oshodin and so this function passed to the people of this quarter.

10. IDUMUOGO:

Many of the founders were natives of Uromi seeking freedom from the perennial crops of tyrants on the Uromi Throne.

11. EBHURU:

The founder of this place was a native doctor from Ebhuru in Ewatto. Some of the early immigrants also came from OKẸDẸ which is part of Ibhiadan of Emu.

12 UHE:
13. IDUMUOLOGHO:

During the Eguare-Ikeakhe War of 1850 many of the people who fled from Emaudo that bore the brunt of the fighting, founded places outside Ekpoma. Such were Uhe and Idumuologho.

14. UKPAJA (322):

A majority of the founders were some of the people who fled from Okaigben in Ewohimi same time as OMI of Amedeokhian.

15. OGBEGO was founded by men from Uromi trying to escape oppression.

16. UDAKPA (410):

In the olden days a woman always accompanied the corpse of an Onojie, and she was put at Ahia to sweep the ancestral settlement and the road leading to the Royal Burying Grounds. Since such a woman was not killed, she was free to have issues, but certainly not males: Any time she had a male child it was immediately killed. One such woman was ANASI, who had a son that was so beautiful that even the men of horror assigned to guard against the birth of male issues, had no nerves to kill the innocent thing. After much hesitation, one Ahia faithful took the baby and dashed its head against the wall, the child falling limp on the flood water near the gutter (ULUAMEN). When everybody had left, the poor mother picked up the baby and nursed it back to life. Before the secret was out that the child did not die, he had grown to be

a handsome young man. His life was spared and his descendants serve with the Oshodin at the Ahia Shrine. His settlement became UDAKPA.

17. AHIA (534):

As said already Edeikholo's first settlement was at Iweala which also formed Oghomighon's first Eguare. Some immigrants later came from different places, particularly AYA in Ighanlan area giving rise to new quarters. Today Ahia consists of Obeize, Aboranlẹn and Iweala.

18. IDUMEBO, as already seen, was founded after Oghomighon had replaced Ojieromon as the new leader.

19. IGWISI: Was founded by men from UGHALA in Benin.

ADMINISTRATIVE GROUPING:

(a) EGBELE NENEN:— Comprises Eguare, Ugbeni, Oyomo and Idumuowemen.

(b) ORUEN IDAI:— Oruen Oniha, Uwokha, Idumehan, Idumu-Oshodin and Idumuogo.

(c) OGHENYEN:— Uhe, Idumebo, Ebhuru and Idumuohanlen.

(II) KINGMAKERS:

The Elders of the Egbele Nenen form the kingmakers.

ONOJIE'S DEATH:

As soon as an Onojie died, in the olden days, the EGBAMA (Igene) began to collect firewood. A ditch was dug in an open enclosure in the Palace. Over this ditch was erected a high wooden platform. The dead Onojie was placed on this platform and a fire kept going in the ditch below. For three months it was the Egbama's duty to see that this fire never went out. In this way the body was mummified. Then Ahia people came to remove the body through a winding path and on such a day any person at Eguare dared out at his own risk. Thus no Eguare man really ever saw Ahia people removing the body. As a result of the three months slow drying the head often fell off the body, thus saving Ahia from the unpleasant task of having to decapitate their late ruler.

Originally the heir was forbidden to visit Eguare. This was to avoid jealousy on the father seeing his son growing and to curb undue anxiety on the heir's part. As a child, the traditional living place was the ỌTỌN'S place at Idumehan, and he came to know Eguare as a grown up man on the day his father died. He stayed in an appointed odion's house and was never permitted to live in Odugha until after burial and installation. This was three months from the time the late Onojie died. All this time the palace had to be under the care of his senior uncle or the late Onojie's next brother. The administration of the town was in the hands of the Oniha.

As soon as he arrived Eguare and before the process of mummification began he washed his father with the beheading of a man, but after 1900, a cow and a fat goat replaced this. The market and the main gate to the harem had to be closed by the beheading of human beings across the entrances. The burial ceremonies for the people of Eguare and Ahia then began. This was completed with the Ogbe ceremony.

(III) INSTALLATION:

The Burial and Ogbe ceremonies over, the heir was ripe for the inheritance of his father's property and installation. The Oniha came from his village—Oruen and performed his official crying which officially broke the news of the Onojie's death to the inhabitants of the harem. A female slave was then slaughtered (Now a Cow) to re-open the market and the harem. After the Iluobo by the Osukhure, the heir was counted on the throne by the Oniha. For his services he was given a girl as a wife, a goat and UJE — nearly 18,666 cowries.

(IV) GENEALOGICAL TREE:

From UDO Aruaran

IZIBI or IJESAN OF UDO.

ẸDẸIKHỌLỌ or ẸDẸ.

OJIERỌMỌN

ỌGHỌMIGHỌN The Great 1463,

AKE

ASIKPALA

UWAGBỌR

EMATỌN

UWAGBỌLE

ỌBALOJIE

USIFO N'OJIE, 1800

AGBỌGAMẸN, 1855

ELABỌR I, d. June 1920.

UGBESEA (d. 1919.)

ẸBHOJIE (d. 1923.)

ALOWA (for 8 mons)

OKOJIE (3 yrs.)

OTHERS

ELABOR II

OTHERS

ABUMẸRE

OTHERS

(V) COMMENTS:

SINCE THE death of ELABOR I Ubiaja has been torn by succession strife and this of course has retarded the growth of the district—so much so that but for the importance given it by its being the administrative headquarters of Ishan Division since 1906, Ubiaja could have become a

third rate clan by now. At one time it practically became a vassal of Ugboha.

First Ojieromon of Idumebo should have been the very first Onojie, but for the selfish Ewuare's diplomacy, and Ojieromon's own pride. OGHOMIGHON left his mark in the history of Ubiaja. He revelled in attempting the impossible. He it was who wanted to quench his thirst with a cup of water from the Niger which in those roadless days must have been some 40 miles away. Oghomighon lined up men from the bank of the Niger to his palace and each man passed the cup full of water to the next man without taking a step. Men tie the expensive Coral Beads round their wrists and ankles as a mark of wealth and rank. If a few coils showed wealth, Oghomighon would show he was richer than any other monarch by tying coils round a palm tree from the ground to the top! He had not got half-way before death showed there was somebody mightier than the great Oghomighon! He was deified by his people.

The last great Onojie Ubiaja had was USIFO N'OJIE, so called because of his wealth, wisdom and peaceful reign. He achieved fame without the vampire technique of the famous enijie like Eromosele, Ogbidi, Eimuan, Imadojiemu etc. After Elabor I the light of the Ruling House of Ubiaja went out to be replaced with darkness in which hatred, confusion, suspicion and bi-partisan warfare could be identified easily. Elabor was a white-handed, slow-talking, publicity-shy Ruler. Because of this, Chief Obiyan did most of the talking for him until he had virtually eclipsed him as Onojie. To counter this, Elabor I's heir, the precocious and bold UGBESEA, decided to speak for his father. He in turn, became a man of so much affluence that people tended to forget the existence of Elabor I. The magic word in Ubiaja became UGBESEA. Of this Prince it is enough to say that those who knew him best loved him least. Drunk—and this was his usual condition — he was unpleasant, but in his brief and rare sober moments, he was quite impossible.

THE EKO WAR, 1913:

When Ikeken rebelled against Ugbesea's flamboyant show of power and authority, soldiers and friends of Ubiaja went to Ikeken; amongst them was the great Odigie of Okaigben, Ewohimi. But for Ugbesea, Ikeken should have still remained part of Ubiaja. As he eclipsed his father he tried to overshadow the other Enijie of Ishan — all monarchs by right. His last act was the impudent assault on the great Ogbidi in 1918. Ubiaja owes it to Ugbesea that he was the cause of all the muddle and strife in the town today: but for his untimely death, there could have been no EBHOJIE, no ALOWA and no REGENCY.

At the height of his fame as a Prince and ruler, death struck at the Palace: Ugbesea predeceased his father! The result was that when Elabor I died in June 1920, the first surviving son was EBHOJIE, who performed the burial and Ogbe ceremonies, before he was installed.

For the second time in a short time of space, death again struck at the palace prematurely; the new Onojie, Ebhojie, died in 1923, with his son and heir, ABUMẸRE, a minor, only about a year old! A regent had to be appointed, and constitutionally, the choice had to be from amongst Elabor I's sons according to age. Right from then the kingmakers got into a muddle, for IMADOJIEMU succeeded in imposing himself on the palace as a regent in place of ALOWA who was next in line. After a month the kingmakers won and Imadojiemu had to yield place to ALOWA.

In 1924, the Ojigolo (Ilushi) road was being constructed under the forced labour ordinance; on one occasion when Ubiaja went to work on the road, it was so wet that many people returned ill. Three died from

Pneumonia, caught from the dampness and exposure. Ubiaja summoned a big protest meeting presided over by no less a person than the Regent Alowa. It was unanimously decided that no Ubiaja man should again be sent to work on the Ojigolo road: if the white man wanted a road to the Niger he should hire labourers to build it for him. If they caught Fever and 'Arrows in their chest', that would be by-products of their gain! Though no oath was actually taken, the decision was as binding as ever!

When it was Ubiaja's turn to send men again, no one went. Then Mr. R. L. Archer (till this day it is believed he could fire his barbed arrows with equal ferocity at both plaintiff and accused) sent to ask why. For an answer he had all Ubiaja milling round his District Office. He told the crowd to go back into the town and that he would be satisfied with hearing from their leader, Alowa. Thus the poor man, who only a few days previously had chairmaned a meeting at which it was decided that the Ojigolo road was a white man's burden, found himself face to face with the white man, biggest and fiercest within a radius of 100 miles! Under normal conditions Archer's eyes emitted invisible arrows, but on this occasion, they emitted easily identifiable fire! A few aids flanking Alowa were nudging him to speak up Ubiaja's mind — but what he uttered was sacrilegious to Ubiaja; said Alowa, "You want us to build the Ojigolo road and Ubiaja people are angry about it. I personally do not see why we should be angry; we will go to work." That was his doom. He escaped Archer's arrows, but before he got to the palace, there was already a formidable caucus, at which he was to face a humiliating inquisition. He ran back to the District Officer to lodge a complaint, this leading to arrest of the ringleaders. There and then they were charged with disobeying and inciting others to rebel against constituted authority; of course they got various terms of imprisonment, and that got Alowa squarely into the mess. A more formidable meeting was called. Alowa was reminded that he was only an AKHẸOA and having "watched the house badly" he should consider his services as no longer required by Ubiaja! He ran to Benin City to report to his junior brother, ẸIGBUKHUO, now ELABOR II. In his own interest he stayed away from the angry mob of Ubiaja.

The Ubiaja throne was again vacant. Imadojiemu, the senior maternal brother of Eigbukhuo (Ukhuo), reared up his head again, and a succession strife began this time between Okojie, the next in line of succession and Imadojiemu. Okojie was a Road Headman on the Opoji road and he returned home to be able to direct his battle against his junior brother. The kingmakers got another chance to fish in troubled waters. At the end, that was later in 1924, Okojie was made Akheoa. Soaked in corruption and blinded by avarice, Okojie was asked by the kingmakers to perform the burial and Ogbe ceremonies. Ignorant of Ishan custom, he deluded himself and falsely hoped he would be safeguarding the title for himself and his descendants by performing the Burial Ceremonies of his father which had been done four years previously by unlucky Ebhojie. As the people of Ahia and the 'Elder Brother people of Udo' stood to benefit from this corrupt ruling of the kingmakers, they welcomed the valueless feast of Okojie. The all-powerful Egbele Nenen directed him first to kill a goat at the ancestral shrine to adopt the young Ebhojie's heir, ABUMERE. For fear, love of office or through ignorance or through all together, Okojie adopted Abumere as his own heir according to Ishan law and custom. Then he went through the expensive Burial and Ogbe Ceremonies, after which his stupid mistake glared at him. "ALL THIS FOR NOTHING! I die and my true son has no place!" He decided to right things before the departed spirits. He bribed a few elders of the Egbele Nenen, who he thought could make and unmake!

Back to the ancestral shrine they went and secretly they spilled the irresistible goat blood for the departed spirits, telling them to ignore the adoption that had been made before and that from that minute, Abumere had ceased to be his lawful heir!

Unfortunately the news of this secret disinheritance leaked out and before the last of the goat flesh had disappeared from Odugha, the Egbele Nenen assembled in the palace in full strength. Okojie was summoned to explain his strange doings and from that moment his own troubles began. Later he was accused of calling in a powerful native doctor to make a quick-killing medicine with which to liquidate the more vocal kingmakers. "Kings call medicine men in order to seek peace and prosperity in their towns, Okojie calls his to reduce the population of Ubiaja!" That was the last count in a number of accusations. The elders of Uhe were consulted as to the prescribed punishment for the type of offence the untried Okojie was guilty of. The august reply from these men of wisdom was that the punishment for such an Onojie was public hanging at UHỌNMILO of Ubiaja. Since the white man would no longer allow such a quick way of settling matters, and what was more, the Reverend Fathers had turned the fearful Uhonmilo into a living place, Okojie was asked to pack and keep moving. Unrecognized he stuck to the palace until about 1927 when all Ubiaja ẸLINMIN (Masqueraders) assembled before the Palace and demanded Okojie's body, dead or living. Then and then only Okojie sensed the seriousness of his enemies; any attack by masked men would be so riotous that nobody would be able to lay his hands on the real murderer; so Okojie fled and made for Auchi.

He later returned to Opoji but one day while returning from Ubiaja to Opoji via Udo, he fell off his bicycle and was later found dead. And once more Ubiaja found itself a people without a leader and the next five years brought them bitterly face to face with the humiliations of a body without a head: it can writhe in pain, but it cannot progress! Ubiaja drifted in the then hazy atmosphere of Ishan political life. As Ishans say, OJIE KHẸ ẸBHO (The king is the Community). If the king is strong and powerful the community under him will be virile and progressive; if he is decrepit and timid, his domain will be unsteady, weak and his subjects would be kicked about like a ball outside their country. Ubiaja that had got places like Udo, Okhuesan, Onogholo etc. under its wings, had to be ruled itself from outside. Truly by 1930 the late Okojie of Ugboha had begun to sign himself officially as "District Head of Ubiaja at Ugboha"! It took Ubiaja five solid years to see the irony of their fate—people without a leader could only be followers!

From abroad and at home, everyone was aware of what was wrong, and PRINCE EIGBUKHUO, then District Interpreter at Benin City, was invited to take up the throne and break the demoralizing interregnum. Prince Ukhuo, though the TWELFTH SON of Elabor I, and at that time having the erstwhile Alowa (who did not die until 1940), ỌNỌDIASIKẸ, LAWRENCE OKODUGHA, IBHAWA, AGHẸDO etc. as his seniors, had the great advantage of being literate and wise in the white man's ways. A man of his intelligence must have been tormenting inwardly to see the town left by his father and once made famous by a mere Prince like Ugbesea, in such a sorry plight. He answered his people's call, left his lucrative and respectable position and returned home in March, becoming Onojie, NOT A REGENT, in May 1932, after performing the IRUEN Ceremony.

Today the trouble in Ubiaja stares any enquirer in the face. The town is full of jealousy, hate and intrigue. Scarcely any two elders agree on what is good and right for the town. Many people want Elabor II, who sacrificed so much and done so much to reclaim the down-trodden name of Ubiaja and made it the envious headquarters of the North-East

Federation of Ubiaja, Ugboha, Udo, Oria and Ilushi Clans, to step down for Ebhojie's son. With a delicate matter as this concerning a Constitutional Monarchy, unfortunately, it is not what is fitting and proper but WHAT IS CUSTOMARY AND RIGHT that must be the overriding factor. Ubiaja will know no peace until its kingmakers are prepared to shut their eyes against corruption, avarice, envy and disregard for Native Law and Custom.

I will consider this Ubiaja constitutional muddle in more detail, but before this, a few words about this child of destiny — ABUMERE. When Ugbesea died in May 1919, three of his wives called AKHAHỌN, UNUFOLO and one other were inherited according to custom by EBHOJIE, who had become the next surviving son of Elabor I. Akhahon, an Eguare Okhuesan woman, as Ebhojie's wife, had a son in 1922. This child named Abumere was only about 12 months old when Ebhojie died. Abumere's senior brother who Akhahon had got for Ugbesea, was ẸSELEBỌR. Unufolo, a native of Idueguanokokhun Ugboha, and daughter of Egbedion, had a son, PAMA, for Ebhojie. Yet another son for Ebhojie was AKPUKPUNA. Thus Abumere, Ebhojie's son and heir had and still have two living brothers — Pama and Akpukpuna. These two were mere babies when their father died in 1923.

Many agents of confusion and with an axe to grind, say that Ebhojie only had a daughter called ABAAGHA, and that Abumere was Prince Ugbesea's son. That is deceit, the implications of which the kingmakers ought to know, if truth is anything to these traditional men of importance. When Ebhojie died, everyone agrees that Abumere was a sucking child just beginning to walk. Ugbesea died in May 1919 and his wife was inherited. Ebhojie did not become Onojie until 1920 and three years after, he himself died, living a son, Abumere as a baby! Thus these agents of strife would want people to believe that a baby of 12 months in 1923, was fathered by a man who died in 1919!

Yet another method of throwing dust into the eyes of historians is the constant reference by some Ubiaja people to the fact that when Akhahon sued for divorce, it was to AZẸKHUEMẸN, Ugbesea's heir, that the dowry was returned. That might be so, but it did not make a 12 months baby in 1923, a son of a man who had died four years previously. It certainly did not make Abumere (and nobody in Ubiaja infers that) the son of Azekhuemen. Azekhuemen, if really he received the dowry refunded by Akhahon, must have done so only on one ground: first the woman was his own father's wife, later inherited by his Uncle Ebhojie. When Ebhojie died he had no grown up son to inherit his property, including wives; thus the wives were left for the immediate family to appropriate by inheritance. Who were these immediate family members? They were Alowa, Okojie, Imadojiemu etc. who, as have been seen already, were deeply engrossed in a battle of attrition over the vacant throne. A fight for women then would have been an anticlimax! With these men who ought to have inherited Ebhojie's wives, tearing at their own throats over the Onojie title, these women were, as we say in Ishan, "like women without a husband"—men treat them as a booty or loot and they make excellent footballs! Akhahon, a self-respecting lady, tired and sick of this disgraceful life, finally sued for divorce: who else would be more interested in the welfare of what was Prince Ugbesea's loved wife, but his heir!

The truth therefore is that Abumere, now a young man of 32 in 1954, is the TRUE SON AND HEIR of Ebhojie, not the son of Ugbesea or Azekhuemen. One word more: as I have shown already there are other Ebhojies to cause evil minded kingmakers of Ubiaja, more nightmares. Pama is an easily identifiable one such. To trace him is not difficult;

his senior sister, ASẸGHẸ, was married, known to everybody interested in Ubiaja affairs, to OBIYAN of Amedeokhian. When this man died in 1942, Aseghe ran mad, but she did not die until 1953. Thus while all eyes are focussed upon innocent Abumere, another Ebhojie is blossoming unseen—but bright enough to be adding to the headache of the kingmakers!

Now for the Ubiaja Chieftaincy muddle that would require the best exponents of Ishan Laws and Custom to unravel. The acts of omission and commission of the Kingmakers are just terrible. I will take them seriatim.

1. The Ubiaja custom like the pure Ishan custom, is for the heir to begin and end the burial of his father within three months of his father's death. As soon as the vital parts are completed he is installed. Ebhojie, therefore had to go through with both the Burial and Ogbe Ceremonies before he became Onojie in 1920; That placed Abumere squarely in the line of succession.

2. After Alowa's fiasco, Okojie was asked to ascend the throne on the understanding that he was

(a) An Akheoa and

(b) Acting for Ebhojie's Abumere who was a minor.

To make assurance doubly sure, he was asked to first adopt Abumere as his own heir, before he was installed. The next instruction to Okojie showed the kingmakers as a pack of irresponsible bribe-hungry men, tradition had given Ubiaja, to choose her highest man of authority: Okojie was asked to perform the Burial and Ogbe Ceremonies; Elabor I, his father had long been buried and the Ogbe ceremony performed by Ebhojie before his installation. Who was Okojie performing these ceremonies for? It is astonishing that nobody amongst the kingmakers ever asked this question. Apparently the kingmakers were ready to accept anybody prepared to give them extra bribes, feast etc. Even the traditionally important men of Ahia and Udo acquiesced to the kingmakers' irresponsible demand since they too stood to benefit by way of their customary dues. Okojie, excited over the prospects of getting onto the Ubiaja throne, was prepared to do anything asked by the kingmakers. He thoughtlessly killed a goat at the ancestral shrine to inherit Abumere, who from then on became ABUMERE OKOJIE—heir to the throne! Then he proceeded to perform the expensive Burial and Ogbe Ceremonies. Having finished he realised that all he had done was to enable the Onojie title to remain in his own line during his own lifetime. He became painfully aware of the terrible mistake his anxiety and greed for power and wealth had led him to. As explained already his attempt to undo what had been done at the ancestral shrine, made him a suspect of trying to preclude Abumere from his lawful right, and secure it for his (Okojie's) children. The boycott of the Palace soon after was just a logical conclusion of a bad business. If the Ubiaja kingmakers were not experts at creating difficulties for themselves where lay the sense in asking Okojie to go through vital ceremonies that might give him and his children pretence to the throne? I have no doubt that Okojie in going through these ceremonies had the deluded notion that they might make his children's claim surer. The Ishan custom of Burial and Ogbe entitles ALL CHILDREN OF A MAN to inheritance of the family title and property, in order of seniority. If the first son before inheriting these has the sense to go through the ceremonies himself, he rules out his other brothers. When this custom is applied, to the Okojie case, we can appreciate the thorns Ubiaja kingmakers had sown for Abumere and Okojie's sons: When Okojie performed these ceremonies after

adopting Abumere, he performed them FOR ALL HIS CHILDREN, from the adopted son to his legitimate sons!

3. The final muddle in this bewildering movements of the Kingmakers was the invitation to Prince Eigbukhuo. For one thing, he was down the list of Elabor I's children, actual position, being 12th, amongst the males. As a wise and educated man he was not going to put his neck in the noose just as his elders had done with disastrous results. He was fully aware of the fact that the kingmakers knew what a sacrifice it was for him to leave the security of a nice job with a loss of his pension and gratuity—but he wanted something concrete in return. So an agreement, witnessed by Commander Pykenott, was signed between the Prince and the kingmakers to the effect that

(a) The kingmakers removed Prince Ukhuo from his job to come and help put home in order.
(b) Ebhojie's young son Abumere is the rightful owner of the throne.
(c) Prince Ukhuo was to ascend the throne and remain Onojie for life but
(d) On his death, Abumere was to succeed him, but should Abumere predecease him, his (Ukhuo's) heir would succeed him.

Prince Ukhuo considered the agreement fair enough and in May 1932 he became Onojie of Ubiaja as ELABOR II. But within twenty years, Elabor II with his education, experience, tact and humility, found himself face to face with envy, ingratitude and the psychologically nerve shattering repetition of the kingmakers that he was AFTER ALL ONLY AN AKHEOA! At first it was that as soon as he died Abumere would come unto his own—but later the rumbling turned into a roar—open demand for him to step down since Abumere was now a grown up man!

A word about this agreement which only made for peace during the life span of Elabor II. The fourth clause in this strange agreement makes some Ishans wonder if the kingmakers of Ubiaja are themselves sane and ever have the interest of their home at heart. Ishan all over, a man performs the Burial and Ogbe Ceremonies to perpetuate the family inheritance and succession to the family title in his own line. In 1920 when Ebhojie performed these ceremonies he made the claim to the Onojie title secure in his line. Thus if his first son died, the next in order of succession would be the second son, and if that was dead too, then the third son and so on. No other line would be considered until all Ebhojie's legitimate sons have died out.

Now Clause 4 in the Prince Ukhuo—Kingmakers Agreement stated that should Abumere predecease Prince Ukhuo, then Elabor II's son would succeed to the throne. That is at variance with the dictates of Native Laws and Custom. What of Pama, Ebhojie's second son? What of Akpukpuna et al?

As I see it Ubiaja is in for a lot of political unrest once the present Elabor II has played his part and gone. It will be the duty of lovers of Ubiaja to bring sanity back to the Kingmakers. It will be their sacred duty to winnow facts from the imaginary and deliberate distortions. For over thirty years the kingmakers' bungling had nearly completely ruined Ubiaja as a virile Chiefdom. Nothing is ever settled until it is settled aright. Any settlement not based upon Ishan Laws and Custom will, at best, be a patchwork, merely postponing acceptance of the truth and subjecting poor Ubiaja to further humiliations!

Postscript: After the Government instituted Ogunaike Enquiry of 1956, Elabor II was destooled and Prince Abumere became Onojie as Ebhojie II in 1958.

CHAPTER XX

UDO (411)

1. History:

The founder was IZIBI better known as IJESAN. He was the senior brother of EDEIKHOLO of Ubiaja. After the banishment of Ede for pilfering at the Oba's Palace, Izibi later traced him and found him in Esan. By now Ede had found new wealth and position of authority at IWEALA. Blinded by his new importance he dealt with his elder brother harshly and disrespectfully, so much so that Izibi decided to escape the insult of this ungrateful brother by going to found a settlement of his own. He settled first at IKẸKẸDẸ.

Some elders maintain that it was from the present Eguare that people went to found settlements in Ikekede. This is incorrect. The Onojie, as a matter of fact, has been there twice: first, during the arrival of Izibi from Benin and, secondly, for a short time, when Izibi who had become Onojie, in a fit of temper, killed AGBỌIKHẸNAN, one of his junior brothers. Since as Onojie he could not be killed for this offence, Udo banished him from Eguare for a short period. He went to live in his original settlement in Ikekede. True, more people followed him to swell the few that had been left behind originally. When he paid the dues Udo demanded of him, he was allowed to return to Eguare. He left some of his children as Ekhaemnon of ỌGHỌNMẸRE, IRAKWA and UDONERIA.

OGHONMERE:

This place was founded by Izibi's second son who became the first IHAZA.

IDUMUAKHIMI:

This was the place founded by the third son who became the Ezomo. This is why in Udo, the Ihaza is senior to the Ezomo.

ERIA OR UDONERIA (150):

The fourth son and his party remained when the Onojie, his father, returned to Eguare after his atonement. As a result of his influence and popularity he was made the Iyasele.

IRAKWA:

Enema, Izibi's fifth son founded this quarter.

EKO-UROMI:

An Uromi Prince called UTỌMI with his family was the first settler in this quarter.

EKO-UGBODU:

This place was founded by EDẸN of Uromi, but he was later joined by the influential and wealthy UGBODU whose name eclipsed that of the first settler.

EKO-OKUKPON:

Was founded by Okukpon, an Uromi man; but his followers were from Eguare Udo.

Oghonmere, Irakwa and Udoneria together form IKEKEDE.

2. Kingmakers:

The elders of Eguare form the kingmakers of Udo. They form ẸGBẸLE-IBHIJIE.

3. Installation:

The late Onojie must be honoured with the customary burial and Ogbe ceremonies before a successor is installed. As soon as the Onojie dies, the heir's most senior uncle takes charge of the Odugha, while

he gets busy with all the ceremonies ending with the funeral rites. By the end of the third month he is through with all the ceremonies and after the inheritance of his father's wives and property, he is installed as Onojie. The important men in all the ceremonies are the elders of EGBELE-IBHIJIE whose head is the traditional Osukhure. He and the Oniha install the new ruler.

4. Present Onojie:

The present ruler of Udo is a regent and is the second son of AKWẸWANBHỌ. His name is UJIAGBEDIỌN. In 1948 ẸDỌMẸN, a young man of about 26, died shortly after the completion of his father's burial and Ogbe ceremonies. His heir, AMẸBHAGBEMUHỌNMỌN, was then a minor and so his uncle, Ujiagbedion was chosen as the AKHEOA. Ujiagbedion is an experienced, humorous and honest looking man of about 66, and has taken a sincere care of both the palace and the title which he is holding in trust.

5. Genealogical Tree:

From Udo Aruaruan

1

1 — Izibi or Ijesan

1 — Ẹdeikholo of Ubiaja.

1

1 — Aboma.

1 — Olu of Okhuesan.

1 — Akhinemen

1 — Izibili

1 — Ojiekhide

1 — Enoile

1 — Okpe

1 — Ughala

1 — Ogbole

1 — Akhiduemen

1 — Otutu

1 — Eidenojie, 1865.

1

1 — Edomen (1941-1948)

1 — Ujiagbedion, 1948.

1

1 — Amebhagbemuhonmon (Minor).

6. Non-Aggression Pact:

Blood tie kept the people of Udo, Ubiaja and Okhuesan in peace. The peaceful connection between Udo and Ewohimi emphasises the strong kinship organisation of old Ishan. The mothers of Izibi who founded Udo and IKHIMI, the founder of ORIKHIMI, were sisters. This matriline connection was brought down all the way from Benin to Esan and the tie remained strong and unbroken even up to the advent of the British. The Eko War of 1913 is an example of the oneness. Ugbesea's tyranny got to a stage when the humble people of Ikeken rebelled but unfortunately they were so indiscriminate in their expression of hate for Ugbesea who had become synonymous for Ubiaja that soldiers had to be sent. Ewohimi under the leadership of Warrior Odigie, had come to the assistance of their cousin, Ubiaja. Before the arrival of the soldiers, the great AGHO of Ubiaja fell to an Ikeken matchet and to prevent his paraphernalia from falling into the enemies' hands Odigie pulled things from the body of the dead man. The AHA-MA (Ivory) on his wrist could not be pulled and as he drew his matchet to sever Agho's wrist, Obiyan warned, "Remember Ewohimi and Ubiaja do not see each other's blood!" Ikeken had both Warrior Agho's head and Ahama!

Though Ubiaja and Okhuesan fought later, shocking the spirits of the departed forbears by the free show of each other's blood, this was Ubiaja's fault. They had tried to impose themselves far too much upon Okhuesan on the ground that the latter was junior to Ubiaja, which is really Okhuesan's 'UNCLE.' On the other hand the relationship between Udo and Ubiaja has been so cordial that there is no boundary between the two clans. Up till now Ubiaja still sends ẸMINA UKỌ consisting of a leg, a forelimb and half the chest of a cow slaughtered when an Onojie dies in Ubiaja, to Udo. Similarly Udo and Ewohimi still exchange Emina Uko and for the actual burial ceremonies of an Onojie, a goat and a piece of cloth are sent.

CHAPTER XXI

OKHUESAN (Pop. 2,166)

1. History:

The correct name is OKHUẸLE-ESAN, a name which has over-emphasised the connection there is between Okhuele-Odua (Okhuodua) and Okhuesan. From the name it would appear as if there was one Okhuele which split into Okhuele of Odua and Okhuele of Esan. That would be a wrong impression for the only connection between the two places which are quite distinct and separated by a large clan—EMU—is ẸLỌMỌN, the Princess from Benin City who eloped with the audacious OKHIRARE—founder of Okhuodua. This woman after the death of Okhirare, married OLU, one of the junior sons of IZIBI or IJESAN of Udo.

Prince Olu, an independent, resourceful and avid hunter, one day while hunting, came to a spot full of UKHUA (Native Walnut). He was so fascinated by the beauty and richness of the spot, that he came home with a glowing report of it to his father, the Onojie. He packed his property and together with his immediate family members and servants he returned there to settle. Because of the many Ukhua growing wild there Prince Olu's settlement was referred to as ISI-UKHUA or OTỌ-UKHUA which soon got corrupted to OTUKHUA. It was a matter of years for the original name to degenerate into OKHUE.

Now from the union of Olu and Princess Elomon resulted a son called ESAN. By his father's industry and popularity many people in search of peace and quietness came to swell the population of the little hamlet, the inhabitants of which served Olu as a ruler. But the very first person to be installed Onojie formally, was ESAN, Olu's successor. As a grandson of OJUDO (Onojie of Udo), and the half-brother of Erakpe of Okhuodua and Oriomon of Emu, his connections were so regal that he was soon a famous man. Thus the Oto-Ukhua founded by his father came to be known by his name—OKHUE-ESAN.

The blood relationship between places like Udo, Ubiaja, Emu, Ohordua and Okhuesan can now be understood. It is related to Udo and Ubiaja patrilineally, and to Ohordua and Emu, matrilineally. Izibi of Udo was the father of Olu, founder of Okhuesan, while Izibi was the senior brother of Edeikholo, founder of Ubiaja. Esan, the son of Olu, was the son of Princess Elomon, mother of Erakpe of Ohordua and Oriomon of Emu.

With a prolific and much-travelled woman like Princess Elomon, there was bound to be an avalanche of burial complications descending on her offsprings. Her death raised so many issues that brotherly blood was freely spilt, with the one result that would surprise no one: she had to be buried in parts! Death finally caught up with the Princess at Okhuesan; Esan the junior son, then sent word to his senior brothers, Erakpe and Oriomon. Erakpe followed by his people arrived post-haste, and like the big brother he was, demanded as a right, the respected body of their mother. Esan, though the most junior, maintained that since she died on his lap, their mother should be buried at Okhuesan—it was no strange place for her. According to Ishan custom really Elomon ought to be returned to her native place, but in her case, her native land was Benin, which no son however dutiful, was prepared to do! A heated argument ensued but it got temporarily stopped by Okhuodua seizing the dead body and making a dash for it! Okhuesan gave a determined chase and on the road between Okhuesan and Emu, a bitter scuffle followed. Hours later when there was neither hair nor

skin left on their "Respected Mother," Ohordua cut off the dead woman's head and made away with that most prized part of the human body, according to Head Hunters' code! They buried it at Ohordua and the spot is marked today by ẸKI-ẸLỌMỌN. Okhuesan had the consolation of having a headless and skinned body to bury! It was all very shocking for Emu, the middle son who had been quite neutral!

IDELUAN (707):

This was founded by one of Olu's sons called OAKHIRẸMA.

IKIALA (428):

The full name is IKEKIYALA and was founded by ỌGHỌN-GHỌN, son of the Onojie, UWAIFO.

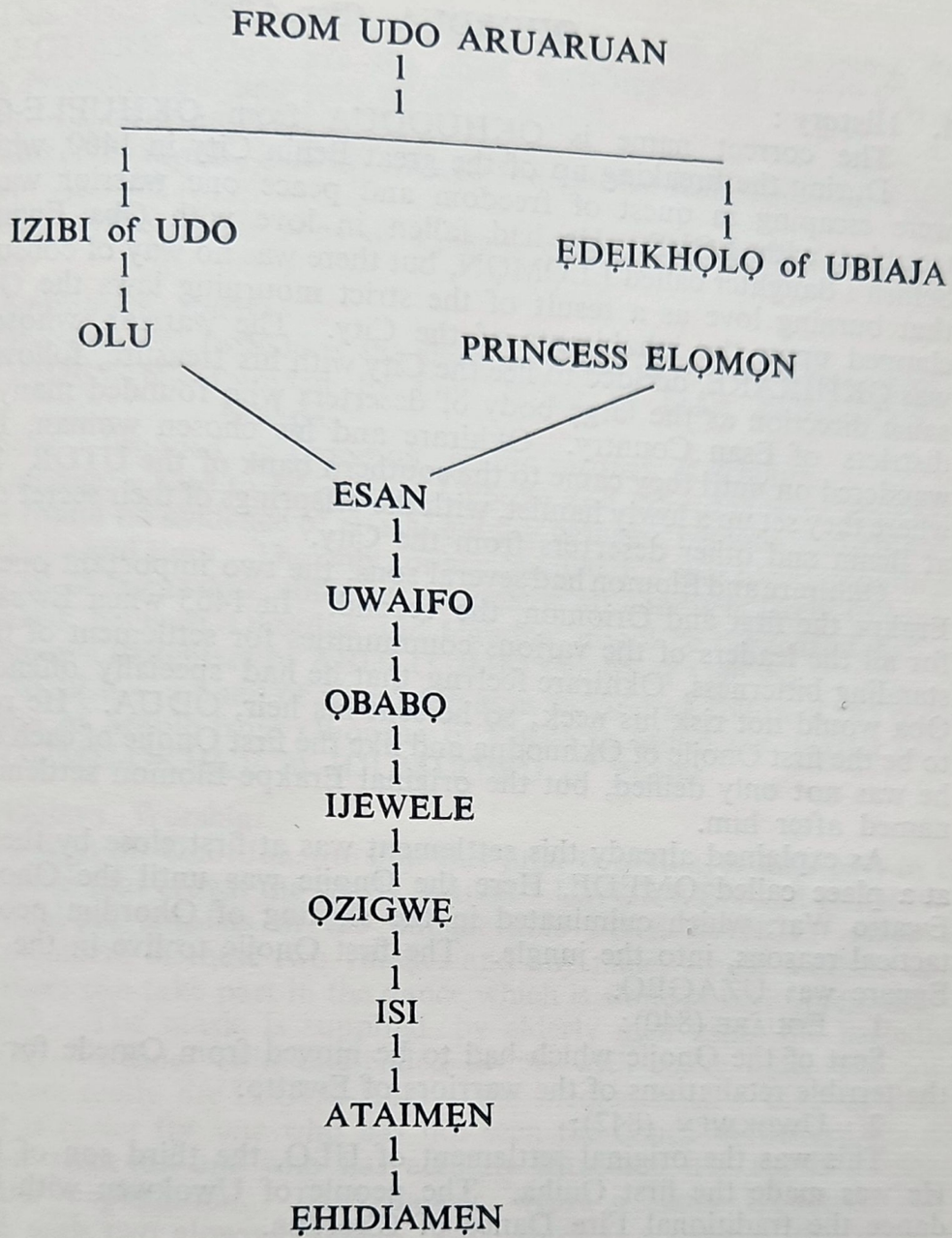
IKEKEN (509):

This village consists of IDUN-ISO and IDUMU-OGWA. The latter was founded by immigrants who had fled from the unrest at Ogwa as a result of the Ekpoma-Ogwa skirmishes. The Idun-Iso quarter was founded by people from Iki Opoji, during the protracted Irrua—Opoji War of 1845—1850.

The site occupied by Idumu-Ogwa was the original Ikekogbe of Iweala, Ubiaja's first Eguare. This really gave the two settlements of Idun-Iso and Idumu-Ogwa their common name. Ogbe is sometimes called EKẸN. Every Eguare in those days had a quarter where the Onojie's servants and slaves lived; it was usually behind the walled Palace grounds, hence this special quarter was called IKẸKOGBE, that is behind the wall. This 'BACK OF OGBE' or 'BACK OF EKEN' at Iweala came to be IKEKẸN which became the over-all name of all the settlements that later grew up in this area.

The original Oto-Ukhua became the Onojie's seat—Eguare, which has a population of 522 today.

2. Genealogical Tree:



CHAPTER XXII

OHORDUA (Pop. 4,768)

1. History :

The correct name is OKHUỌDUA from OKHUẸLE-ODUA.

During the breaking up of the great Benin City in 1460, while men were escaping in quest of freedom and peace one warrior was more troubled with LOVE. He had fallen in love with Oba Ewuare the Selfish's daughter called ẸLỌMỌN, but there was no way of consumating that burning love as a result of the strict mourning laws the Oba had clapped upon the inhabitants of the City. The warrior, whose name was ỌKHIRARE, decided to flee the City with his treasure, following the same direction as the large body of deserters who founded many of the districts of Esan Country. Okhirare and his chosen woman, Elomon wandered on until they came to the southern bank of the UTOR Stream, where they set up a lowly hamlet, with the offsprings of their secret dealings at Benin and other deserters from the City.

Okhirare and Elomon had several sons, the two important ones being Erakpe the first and Oriomon, the second. In 1463 when Ewuare sent for all the leaders of the various communities for settlement of the long standing bitterness, Okhirare feeling that he had specially offended the Oba would not risk his neck, so he sent his heir, ODUA. He returned to be the first Onojie of Okhuodua and like the first Onojie of each district, he was not only deified, but the original Erakpe-Elomon settlement got named after him.

As explained already this settlement was at first close by the stream at a place called ỌMẸDẸ. Here the Onojie was until the Ohordua—Ewatto War, which culminated in the shifting of Ohordua people for tactical reasons, into the jungle. The first Onojie to live in the present Eguare was UZAGBO.

1. EGUARE (840):

Seat of the Onojie which had to be moved from Omede for fear of the terrible retaliations of the warriors of Ewatto.

2. UWOKWEN (842):

This was the original settlement of ULO, the third son of Erakpe. He was made the first Oniha. The people of Uwokwen with Ologwa dance the traditional Fire Dance of Ohordua.

3. OZENYEN (659):

This place was founded by the insubordinate servant of Erakpe called AKHIBHỌ. They are thus not related by blood to the descendants of Erakpe. Here is the traditional home of the Iyasele, the title which the cantankerous servant was given.

4. OREKHE-OBHIE (455):

OBHIẸLE was one of the vivacious sons Erakpe had after he had settled in Ishan. He founded this quarter.

5. IBHIEDU (947):

Edu was first a member of Orekhe-Obhie. He moved out of the quarter to found a place of his own, which came to bear his name.

6. URIWA (466):

When Erakpe was at OMEDE, some cottages were growing deeper inside the area. But when the Onojie shifted inwards, the people he had found in the present Eguare who had to move out for the superior settlers, were the founders of URIWA.

7. OLOGWA (397):

This place was an extension from Eguare and got its name from OLE-EGUARE. They are the chief worshippers of OBIAVA, the much respected guiding juju of all Ohordua.

8. EKABUMERE (111):

This is the rapidly growing cottage founded by Abumere from Eguare.

9. AKPOZA (51):

One of the junior sons of Erakpe, called IYANRU, founded this quarter.

Non-Aggression Pacts:

Ohordua was forbidden the sight of blood of any inhabitants of:—

(a) OHUESAN—founded by Olu, father of Esan, half-brother of Erakpe.

(b) Emu—founded by Oriomon, junior brother of Erakpe.

(c) Ugboha — said to be because Ugboha and Ohordua were 'Brothers.' I have found no evidence of consanguinity between Ugboha and Ohordua or Ugboha and Emu. The only connection which might have strengthened the bond of friendship, sufficient to eschew all conducts likely to lead to bloodshed, between Ohordua and Ugboha, might be the marriage of one of Elomon's daughters to ABULU, third Onojie of Ugboha.

(d) EBELLE—a bond of friendship akin to kindred followed the migration of people from Ohordua to Ebelle to found the quarter called IDUMU-OKHUE in IDUMUOWU of Ebelle.

The Obiava Worship:

Though all Ohordua worship this juju, two villages take part in the ceremonies that crown the yearly festival : UWOKWEN and OLOGWA. This final act consists of the unbelievable FIRE DANCE. Only the male members of these two villages and any males whose mothers come from there can take part in the dance which is done at night preferably in the dark. The music is supplied by elderly men using the herbalists' OKEDE — slender twin one-ended drums with snake hide. The songs and dance really are IYOLO-ẸBO — the medicinemen's kind of dance.

It is easier for one who has not seen the dance to believe the description than for one who has actually witnessed it — for it surpasses scientific explanation. Each dancer wears a short Ubunuku and is armed with two glowing torches. Each torch is a piece of dry wood — usually UBONO, IHIỌNMẸN or AMẸNMẸN — fired at one end. The dancer holds the other end and when he rubs the glowing ends together fine hot sparks are thrown around. These seen in the dark, present the same picture as is seen at fireworks. With occasional shouts of HE - YỌ ! or SHI-I ! or a terrifying HEI ! each dancer makes shuffling or fast movements with his feet or burning sticks in accordance with the rhythm of the drums. As the burning pieces of wood are rubbed together, flaming hot sparks are spread, on the head, body and clothing of the dancers. Some of the dancers fan the fire until it is glowing hot and then they pluck at the fire in the way Ishans eat roasted corn. As the lips come in contact with the glowing fire the onlooker 'feel' the sizzling sensation, but no, again and again, the dancer chews the fire, sometimes opening his mouth and making expiratory movements to fan the hot coke that could be seen glowing in the mouth. Others hold burning charcoal between the teeth or the lips apparently without suffering any burn. This must be so for, I, a doctor, watched this dance with my eyes popping out for two hours, taking particular notice of some dancers who I saw throughout giving the same performance with impunity. Yet it was real fire! Some of the sparks falling on the table in front of me to prevent some of the

onlookers being burnt, actually burnt holes on the wooden table. All over the ground were burning bits of charcoal and upon these the dancers moved unconcerned, unhurried and apparently enjoying themselves. The smoke was sufficient to choke a stoker and the glowing heat from the burning wood was so much that the bare bodies of the dancers with expressionless faces, were soon covered with perspiration.

This wonderful dance surrounded with inexplicable mysticism, is staged during the months of Obiava worship — from December to February.

WARS:

1. THE OKHUODUA—EWATTO WAR:

A few years after the death of the great OSOAH of Ewohimi a great enmity grew between the people of Okhuodua and Ewatto.

One of the earlier settlers of Okede in Ewohimi named IBHIGBODẸ was a maternal relative of Okhirare. This man was deified and yearly, Okhuodua went to honour him at his shrine. That meant frequent going and coming through Ewatto. Soon a friction developed between the two districts and they resorted to the only means of settling such disputes in those days — their matchets! War-leader ALOGUN, founder of ILIGUN of IDUMU-UGBALOGUN in Uwokwen, led one battle against Ewatto and in a desperate disregard for his personal safety, got at the Onojie of Ewatto's proximity and recklessly beheaded him. To add insult to injury, he came home with the head as a trophy, to the astonishment of all Ohordua. That was too much. When a single common head fell in Ewatto to an Ohordua man's matchet Ewatto strained all nerves to retaliate with dropping two heads at Ohordua, 'and now their own Onojie's head had been brought home to Ohordua!' Knowing that Ewatto's blood would be boiling and their reprisal would know no limit, Okhuodua decided that discretion was the better part of valour: The whole settlement and their Onojie Uzagbo made a dignified and strategic withdrawal into the inaccessible jungle. This was about 1810.

Being of the Ruling class the new-comers soon began to bring pressure to bear upon the people who were where they had shifted to. Unable to stand their arrogance any longer, the URIWA people left their original settlement for a safer distance. Peace was never made with Ewatto until the time of UWAIFO the Peace-maker.

2. THE OKHUODUA—UBIAJA WAR:

The causes of this bloodshed were immediate and remote. An Ubiaja man seduced the wife of the Onojie of Ewohimi — an abomination, but since the adulterer was not under the jurisdiction of the Onojie, there was no way to punish him. To cool his frayed temper, he came down to Ubiaja and dropped a head — no matter whether the unlucky man had known his ex-wife or not, what mattered being that an Ubiaja head had rolled on the ground in atonement of his lost wife! This was an overt act of war and skirmishes soon broke out between Ewohimi and Ubiaja. Okhuesan, wedged in-between Ewohimi and Ubiaja, by its position undeservedly suffered during the initial skirmishes; on many occasions Ubiaja dropped heads rather indiscriminately on their way to Ewohimi, and to their chagrin, the heads turned out to belong to Okhuesan farmers! So Okhuesan declared for Ewohimi. Ubiaja then brought its whole weight on Okhuesan, and hearing that their brother was attacked, Okhuodua came to Okhuesan's rescue, and swelled the rank of Ewohimi's allies; Ubiaja therefore had the worse of the fight.

II. PRESENT ONOJIE:

Is His Highness, P. A. O. ẸDOISA II. He was ẸIKPAOJIE as a Prince. He is an able, cautious ruler who one cannot fail to like after one has come to know him well. He is educated, having attended several schools — R.C.M. Ubiaja, St. Patrick's Enugu, St. Matthias' Lafiaji, R.C.M. Ohordua etc. He joined the Posts and Telegraphs where he worked until his father's death on the 9th of December, 1937. He was immediately recalled and he returned home on the 15th of the same month. As we went to print Edoisa II died — on 24th of July, 1959 — and was succeeded by his son and heir called Onegbenehi, who, as Onojie, assumed the title of his grandfather ORIBHABOR II.

III. KINGMAKERS:

The Elders of the EGBELE-IBHIERAMEN of Eguare constitute the kingmakers.

IV. INSTALLATION:

The system in Okhuodua is definite and leaves very little room for chieftaincy disputes. Though formal burial of the late Onojie is not begun until after three years, there are vital pre-installation ceremonies which entitles the heir to inherit Odugha and all therein. This is the ẸI MIO OJIE BHO BHOKHAN Ceremony, consisting of a day-long feasting for the elders of the kingmakers. The important requirements of the ceremony are OSUGBA EMA EVA (Two large calabashful of Foufou), a large calabash of cured kolanuts and a large quantity of Palm wine, the success of the ceremony depending upon the quantity of left-overs and the number of kingmakers that have been rendered senseless by Bacchus! This ceremony also brings the heir to the rank of the Edion. Then after presentation and blessing at the ancestral shrine by the Osu-khure, who is the most senior of the Egbele-IBHIERAMEN, he is installed by the Oniha, in the presence of the Ihaza and of course the Uwague who is responsible for all the regalia. The heir, with an Ubunuku round his waist, and several coils of coral beads round his wrist and ankles, and standing with his out-stretched arms on piles of cowries, with his wife by his side (he must get himself a wife if he was not already married!) the Oniha counts him on the Ojukhuo; then he steps back giving the salutation of ỌMỌ KHẸ BHỌ, ULOJIE, UTỌ UKHAE! (Long live the King, may you be succeeded by your own son!).

Now he is installed Onojie but according to Ohordua custom, he cannot start the remaining part of the Burial Ceremonies however anxious he may be, before the end of the third year. This is very unfortunate for should he die within this period when he has not yet performed these ceremonies for all Ohordua, the right to the Onojie title passes from his own heir to his next brother, that is the heir's most senior uncle. Similarly, the right to inheritance of the royal family property passes from his line to that of his brother.

V. **Genealogical Tree:**

ỌKHIRARE = ELỌMỌN

ERAKPẸ — ORIỌMỌN of EMU.

ODUA, First Onojie, 1463.

IJEGA.

ỌLỌDUN

ENẸLE

USI

IYARE

IRIBHỌ

UZAGBO — First Onojie in present Eguare, 1810.

ỌGHỌ

UWAIFO, The Peace-Maker, 1875.

ỌDIA

ẸSIJIE

ỌBAZẸLE

ẸDOISA I

ỌRIBHABỌR, d. 9/12/37.

ẸDOISA II, 1937. died 24/7/59.

CHAPTER XXIII

EMU (Pop. 4,354)

I. HISTORY:

The correct name is EMULU.

The founder of Emu, ORIỌMỌN, and Erakpe of Ohordua were full brothers. Before the death of the two Princes, Kuoboyuwa and Ezuwarha, Warrior Okhirare was finding enough trouble in his secret dealings with his idol, Princess Elomon. After the enactment of the unnatural mourning laws, existence became near impossible for the two lovers, and so they fled the City with all they possessed.

While the father Okhirare and his first son, Erakpe settled at Ohordua, the second son crossed the Utor Stream and established a settlement which later came to be known as IDUMOGBE. Here he himself began to multiply; his first son was UWAGBỌR. Oriomon was a great farmer who devoted all his energy and knowledge to getting out of the soil as much yield as possible.

In 1463, when in stooping to conquer, Oba Ewuare the Selfish invited all the Esan leaders to Benin, it was round about May when the yam plants were just spreading and needed roping with constant attention to ensure a good yield. That, in farmer Oriomon's mind, was the wrong time for a social visit particularly as the journey to Benin at that time took anything from three to six months. He asked his son, Uwagbor to deputize for him. Ewuare's diplomatic stroke turned this apparent disrespect to one's sovereign into a boomerang which hit old farmer Oriomon. His son returned to be the Ruler of his people, including his father! Uwagbor became the first Onojie of Emu and to spare his father further insult he moved to the present Eguare, called ORIAKHUAN.

Eguare with a population of 917, consists of

(a) IDUMUAGUE,
(b) AMA,
(c) ẸMOA, majority of whose founders came from Afuda Irrua, and here the Iyasele lives,
(d) UNẸMẸ and
(e) OBIDIGBON, which was founded by Uwagbor himself.

Idunema:

Ema, one of Oriomon's sons founded this place. This quarter with Idumogbe forms AGADAGA.

Ugun:

Here the Oniha lives.

Ibhiadan:

Consists of ODOGBẸ, which came from Eguare, IDUMU-OISẸ, OKẸDẸ from which some migrated to establish part of EBHURU of Ubiaja, and OKPOGBO.

Idumogbe, Oriomon's original site, was named after his second son who remained with his father to develop the place.

Emunekhua:

This consists of IBHIOZE, EKE, UDOH and OBODOGUN. They constitute the early settlers of Emu, soon after the arrival of Oriomon.

Ibhioze was founded by a Benin man called OZE. Here the Edohen is found. Another Benin man called EKE founded Eke, and his junior brother UDOH was the founder of Udoh. Obodogun settlers were immigrants from OKPANAM in Asaba Division. Odin the founder of OROWA, was a brother of Oze of Emunekhua.
Obo-o and AKHIOMEN are other quarters of Emu.

II. PRESENT ONOJIE:

The present Onojie of Emu is H.H. OJIEALEKHE II. He is an educated, quietly dignified man. He had his education at the Catholic School, Ubiaja finishing up at the C.M.S. School, Sapele. He worked in Sapele and later taught in the R.C.M. School, Ohordua. He became the Onojie in 1924.

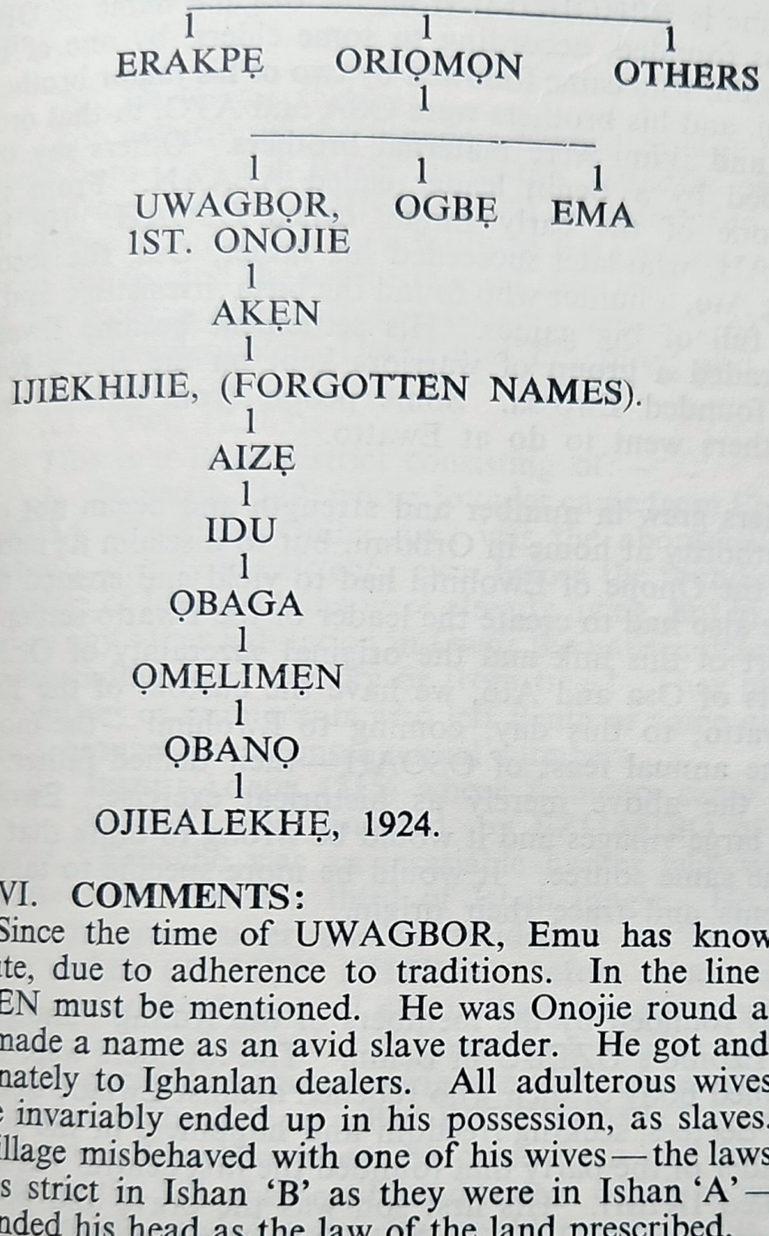
III. KINGMAKERS:

Eguare Edion are the Kingmakers of Emu. Like the rest of Ishan after the kingmakers have made their selection according to custom, the Oniha performs the installation, after Iluobo with blessings by the Osukhure who is the most elderly of the EGBELE-IBHIERANMEN.

IV. INSTALLATION:

Emu places emphasis on the constant occupancy of the throne. On the day the Onojie dies, if there is no argument about the heir, he is installed. Then he must begin the Burial Ceremonies at once in order to have legal right to both the family property and the Onojie title, for should he die before he has performed these ceremonies both pass away from his line.

V. GENEALOGICAL TREE:



VI. **COMMENTS:**

Since the time of UWAGBOR, Emu has known no chieftaincy dispute, due to adherence to traditions. In the line of rulers, OMELIMEN must be mentioned. He was Onojie round about 1880—1900, and made a name as an avid slave trader. He got and sold slaves indiscriminately to Ighanlan dealers. All adulterous wives of neighbouring Enijie invariably ended up in his possession, as slaves. If a man from the village misbehaved with one of his wives — the laws of adultery were not as strict in Ishan 'B' as they were in Ishan 'A' — Omelimen never demanded his head as the law of the land prescribed. He merely looted and sacked the village of origin of the offender!

CHAPTER XXIV

EWOHIMI (Pop. 15,432)

1. History:

The correct name is ẸBHOIKIMI from the original name of ORIKIMI. Orikimi was founded, according to some elders, by one of the immigrants from Benin, who came followed by two of his junior brothers. His name was Ikimi, and his brothers were OSA and ATO, in that order of seniority. Osa and Ikimi were maternal brothers. Others say that Orikimi was founded by a Benin leader called ALAAN. From this Prince descended one of the early Enijie, called OSOAH. He had three sons — AGAAH, who later succeeded his father, Osa, the second and the third, being Ato, a hunter who found the bush irresistible and so settled in a place full of big games. His settlement became Ewatto. The second son headed a group of warriors kept on the Benin Road as guards. They founded Ewossa. Some people from Orikimi went to join them as others went to do at Ewatto.

Soon the soldiers grew in number and strength and began not only to challenge the authority at home in Orikimi, but to disclaim its nationality. At the end the Onojie of Ewohimi had to yield and created their leader Onojie. He also had to create the leader of the Ewatto settlement Onojie. In support of this link and the original suzerainty of Orikimi over the settlements of Osa and Ato, we have the custom of the Enijie of Ewossa and Ewatto, to this day, coming to Ewohimi — the mother settlement — for the annual feast of OSOAH — their deified father.

I have given the above merely as historical exercise. Ewohimi consists of several large villages and it would be wrong to think that they originated from the same source. It would be more specific to take the different components and trace their origin.

(a) EGUARE:

This place was founded by the members of the Ruling Family who came direct from Ezomo's UZEBU in Benin. The founders were members of the disciplined body of men who rebelled against Ewuare's selfishness and despotic decrees, seeking freedom and happiness in the jungles of Ishan. The leader of the party that founded the first central settlement was a warrior called IKIMI. His first son was the brave and popular ALAAN, who honoured Oba Ewuare's invitation when he won over his rebellious subjects in a way that has become famous for its subtlety. Thus Alaan who had become the settlement's leader since the demise of his father, became the first Onojie of Ikimi's settlement which had been recognized by its name of ORIKIMI becoming the overall name of the whole group of habitations. Alaan, on his death, was succeeded by his heir OSOAH who himself had three famous sons. The senior and heir, was AGAAH. The second was OSA who had the same mother as Agaah, and the third was ATO.

Ato, like the lover of the sport of hunting he was, felt more at home further in the jungle where he could pursue his avid interest without interference. His camp grew into Ebhoato. Osa headed a group of warriors stationed on the Benin-Eka approaches to the main settlement of Orikimi, as guards. Other immigrants from home and elsewhere went to join them and the settlement became Ebhosa.

About 1550, during the reign of OSAWE, they began to think of their settlements as separate entities; their demand for freedom became

so great that the Onojie of Ewohimi had to install their respective leaders, Onojie of their people. Thus for a long time after their towns had grown in size and importance, the rulers of Ebhosa and Ebhoato came to Ewohimi for their installation. But with the arrival of the white men who broke up the autocracy of the Enijie by decentralizing their powers, the complete independence of Ebhosa and Ebhoato became a question of time.

(b) ỌKAIGBEN (5,417):

The majority of the founders headed by war leader ẸZENỌMỌN came from Uzebu in Benin, while the founders of IDUMUABOGHO came from Agbor. IDINRO (597) was founded by OGBE who was the father of OHEN. As a result of the tyranny of the Onojie they had come to join and the severe reprisal they took against him, a large body of the early settlers left and became founders of other settlements in Uromi (Amedeokhian, Utako and Efandion) and Emu (Ugholo).

(c) OWU (2,283):

This is a large district consisting of:—

1. IKHEKHE (549) whose founder came from Ebhoato, but IDUMU-ONIHA where the Oniha lives was the aboriginal settlement of Owu and was already in existence even before the founding of Ebhoato. The founders of Idumu-Oniha were already living, but in abject primitiveness, before any other habitation in Owu; the natives describe such aboriginals as descending from the sky or from trees! They invariably turn out to be fugitives or immigrants who left Benin or some already existing settlements around, in inconsequential numbers.

2. IDUMU-AGBOR (315) whose founders came from Agbor.

3. IZUMEN was founded by EZUAGBO of Egoro, in Ekpoma district. Ezuagbo was an insatiable hunter who with his dogs chased a grass-cutter across a third of Ishan jungle. He, however, got tired before the grass-cutter, and he decided to rest his acheing and bleeding limbs awhile (ZUMẸN KHERE!), before proceeding with the chase. As he rested he forgot all about the grass-cutter which no doubt was nursing its jarred nerves and bones in a thicket nearby; seeing smoke, Ezuagbo decided to trace its origin, and so came upon a lowly settlement presided over by a man called EZEGHUMAGU. In surprise Ezeghumagu asked Ezuagbo where he came from and he told him he was a hunter on the kill of a fleet-footed rodent which he was bent on pursuing after a much needed rest. He would return to his home Egoro when he had got the animal in his bag. "Come in and rest awhile," urged Ezeghumagu, who, producing the long pipe of peace and friendship, usually passed from mouth to mouth as a sign of oneness, soon made the hunter so much at home that for days he forgot all about his dogs not to talk of the lucky grass-cutter! But the irresistible yearning of the hunter soon returned and he took his APKEDE (Cross-bow), collected his arrows ready to go, but the landlord was too crafty to let this man leave him again to his loneliness; he invited him to marry his daughter hoping that might make him stay. The hunter took one longing look at the beautiful damsel and became engrossed with the thought of getting a wife in place of a grass-eating animal!

Ezeghumagu soon began to have fear in his mind that the hunter might one day run away with his daughter to his home in Egoro, so he placed guards round him. On the Igueben road he placed a body of men headed by ASABA. On the Ebelle road, IKHEKHE, one of his

subordinates who hailed from Ebhoato. The house of the hunter and his wife was thus situated centrally.

Now Ezeghumagu who was found in the area was the founder of the aboriginal settlement of IDUMU-ONIHA. The Ebhoato man guarding Ezuagbo on the Ebelle side founded IKHEKHE. Asaba guarding the hunter on the Igueben side, founded IDUMU-ASABA. The hunter and his descendants founded IZUMEN — now hemmed in on all sides.

(d) AGADAGA (1,474):

A majority of the founders came from EGBAIN in Benin while others came from Egoro.

(e) OKEDE (379):

This place was founded by an erring Prince from Ewohimi. He was IBHIGBODE, son of Onojie AMESE, and was related maternally to Okhirare of Ohordua. The banished Prince left Eguare with his family but was consoled with the title of EDOGUN.

IKEKEN is an over-flow from Eguare: Ikeken, Agadaga and Okede form EBHONEA. The traditional home of the Iyasele in Ewohimi is Ikeken.

Orikimi, later corrupted to EBHOIKIMI, was for a long time isolated from the rest of Ishan 'A'. In fact until 1921, when the all-powerful Ishan Enijie Council was formed, it had very little in common with the already well known Ishan towns like Ekpoma, Irrua, Ewu, Uromi, Ugboha and Ubiaja. This was because when the Oba had political and even spiritual control over Ishan, the Enijie in Ishan paid their homage by two different routes. Ishan 'A' — Ekpoma, Irrua, Ewu, Uromi, Ugboha and Ubiaja paid theirs through the Ojirua who directed the proceeds to the Oba via UHỌNMODẸ that is, the Eho way. Enijie of Ishan 'B' — Ewohimi, Emu, Ohordua, Ewatto, Ewossa, Ekpon, Ebelle, Ogwa, Ugun, Ujiogba, Okalo and Igueben paid through the Onojie of Ewohimi, who directed same through the Igbanke—Agbor route to the Oba. This was the reason for the fact that though no Onojie in Ishan 'A' disputed the Okaijesan Title with the Ojirua, the Onojie of Ewohimi had always been at pains to limit the title.

II. Present Onojie:

Is Honourable Samuel Usifo ỌNỌSEGBE II. He is educated and joined the Army in 1942. Between that year and 1947 when the World War was at its fiercest, he served overseas. On the death of his father he was installed Onojie on the 18th of April, 1949 at the age of 28.

Onosegbe II is a young, fearless, sharp witted and fluent Ruler. He is full of zeal, has the knack of being firm without courting charges of autocracy. He has spared no pains in attempts to open up Ewohimi which even as the old administrative headquarters of Ishan 'B' and the original Native Court Centre since 1918 for Ebelle, Ekpon, Ewossa, Amahor, Ogwa, Okalo, Ugun, Ujiogba and Ewatto, was a town with jungles extending to the compounds. Under Onosegbe II the trees have been cut down, with the streets right from Agadaga to Eguare, full of bright sunshine and healthy fresh air.

He brought a worthy glory to Ewohimi by his success at the general election of 1951, which made him an honourable member of the Western House of Chiefs, and a member of the Western Joint Council.

III. Kingmakers:

There are two Palace Societies connected with the selection, appointment and installation of the Onojie in Ewohimi. They are the IWEBO and the IWEGUAE. Both draw their membership from ex-Palace stewards and some hereditary chiefs, all sworn to oath of allegiance to the Onojie. They may be recruited from Eguare and the villages. The Iweguae form the servants of the Household and no secrets of the Palace are withheld from them. They are responsible for the everyday dress of the Onojie and for the discipline and proper conduct of the Onojie. The Iwebo are responsible for the ceremonial dress and this society is headed by the Osukhure, who is appointed not by his age but by selection of the elders of Eguare. Traditionally he must come from a part of Eguare which since 1900, must euphemistically be described as a PARTICULAR QUARTER of Eguare.

The Iweguae who are nearest to the person of Onojie, know the in and out of the Palace, know the children and their ranks best and so have the responsibility of selecting the right heir should there be any dispute over seniority.

IV. Installation:

Ewohimi works on the assumption that the throne is never vacant, expressed locally as ẸKPẸKPẸ ISI or OJIE IFO BHẸ ẸGUALE, but with the strict understanding that should the man so hastily installed in an attempt to uphold this myth, die without completion of the vital burial ceremonies, he would forfeit the right of inheritance of both the family property and title, for his children.

Thus as soon as the Onojie dies, the Iweguae dresses the heir and presents him to the Iwebo saying, "Look at our son we want you to make him a man." For an answer, the Iwebo take him to the bed where the Onojie has died, strip the dead Onojie of the cloth he was wearing, his head-gear and walking stick, all of which are handed over to the person to be made Man. The Osukhure assumes control of the installation ceremonies. Facing the heir he asks, "Who are you?" The heir answers, "I am this dead man's son and heir." This answer is followed with a long pause with the Osukhure looking round the gathering, waiting for any challenge. If someone challenges this assertion the Iweguae are sent back for the selection of the right son and heir. But if after a pause of about ten minutes which gives the proceedings a dignified air, no challenge is forthcoming, he proceeds with the ceremonies. Facing the undisputed heir the Osukhure reminds him of the grave responsibilities which have fallen on his shoulders as a result of his position; he reminds him of the onerous duties of the Onojie title, and then he calls the heir by name, intoning in a grave way, "Remember from this day that you have a boundary with the king of such and such a place on such and such a road," thus demarcating his territory, before the wise man continues, "Within this boundary, all is yours; above you is the Oba and Benin is your origin; within this boundary which you now know, man, animals, birds of the air, trees, roots below the ground are all gifts from God above us all for you. The land is yours because your fathers defended it against other kings. Do not let it shrink in your time, on the contrary history will remember you if you add to its size; no dishonest decisions, respect the elders who created me today, in turn, creating you now. Remember God hates stealing and if God hates you He hates our land."

With these admonitions complete he counts him on the innermost

Ojiukhuo, making him take his seat on the 11th count. He now steps back and looking at those present he asks, "Has anybody anything to say?" and from the audience consisting of members of the Iweguae, Iwebo and the Princes, some one addresses the man on the throne anyhow — the last insult of his life! The Osukhure then takes the Official Ivie (Royal Coral Bead Necklace) the father used to wear and places it round his neck, saying as he does so, "With this shall you be known as the Ruler of our people!" He then steps back, raises his clenched fist holding the right elbow with the left hand, to give the traditional salute of DO ỌMỌ! UKHA LOJIE UREṆỌMỌṆ! (Hail our lord! May you be succeeded by your son!) Then members of the two palace societies come forward in turn to pay their homage to the new monarch.

As explained already all these ceremonies are just to fulfil the custom of the throne being always occupied, for the man now in the Palace is yet not an Onojie legally and in essence he is a mere caretaker. For instance he is forbidden any outing for the next three months when he should be neck-deep in the vital ceremonies which give him lawful hold on the title. The administration of the town is carried on during this time by the Onojie's next in command, the Oniha, with the Ihaza acting in local matters at Eguare. Yet another support of the fact that he is yet not an Onojie is the strict custom that up till now the death of the last Onojie has not been announced, and so far as the public knows, the late Onojie is still on the throne.

At the end of the third month the Oniha comes in the night accompanied by the newly installed man who carries a lamp. They enter the harem and at each door they stop for the Oniha to shout, "Where is my son?" The woman opens the door and hands over 21 cowries which the Oniha's attendant bags! When they have gone round the harem without seeing the late Onojie, in body or in spirit, the chief shouts, "O! My son is lost!" — a signal for the women to cry and mourn the death of their husband who had been buried three months ago! The cry in the harem is the first public inkling of the momentous happenings in Odugha. An Onojie is dead! Should anybody cry or try to give away the death of the Onojie before this official crying or announcement of the Oniha, the punishment is customary — the slaughtering of the fattest goat in sight against the alarmist!

After this official announcement the women pay a fine of a goat to the elders of Eguare who rush to the Palace to see what is wrong. The fine is a punishment for their exposure of the secret members of the Iwebo and Iweguae had kept for three months back. The chief mourner gives two goats to the Oniha. One is slaughtered to declare the harem open to the new lord supreme of all within, which may mean anything up to 150 women, when an ONOJIE WAS STILL AN ONOJIE! The final reward for the Oniha is a wife.

With the death of the late Onojie now announced publicly, the heir, for that is what he really is to the public, now begins the all-important ceremonies, the vital parts being over in 5—7 days.

V. Genealogical Tree:

IMMIGRANTS FROM BENIN LED BY IKIMI in 1460.
|
ALAAN — FIRST ONOJIE, 1463.
|
ỌSOAH, 1480.
|

IBI	AGAAH, 1520	ỌSA	ATO
	ỌSAWẸ, 1540.		
	AMESE		
	UWAIFO		
	ỌMỌNỌKHUA		
	USIFO		
	ỌRIABỌR		
	ỌDIA, 1810.		
	AIGBE		
	OBỌMẸSE, 1880.		
	IFEBHỌ, 1900		
	ỌNỌSẸGBE I, 1931.		
	ỌNỌSẸGBE II, 1949.		

VI. Comments:

As explained already it is only of recent — say in the early thirties — that Ewohimi began to have a lot in common with the rest of Ishan, particularly Ishan 'A'.

To the surrounding districts of Emu, Ohordua, Ewatto, Ebelle, Ekpon, Amahor, Ogwa, Ugun, Ujiogba, Okalo and Ewossa, the Enijie of Ewohimi were well known and through them they paid their yearly homage to the Oba. To correlate the history of the two parts of Ishan, it is helpful to know the contemporary Enijie. ALAAN, the first Onojie of Ewohimi was installed the same time as Ekpereijie of Irrua, Ichesan of Uromi, Oghomighon of Ubiaja, Onor of Ugboha, Uwagbor of Emu etc., while the great ODIA was a contemporary of Usifo of Ubiaja, Ediale of Uromi, Okouruwa of Irrua, etc. AIGBE reigned at the same period as Isidaehomen of Irrua, Agboga of Ubiaja, Olumese of Ugboha and Akhilomen of Uromi. IFEBHO was overlord of Ewohimi while Eromosele the Great was monarch of Irrua, Ogbidi at Uromi, Okojie at Ugboha and the wise Imadojiemu at Opoji acting as Caretaker for the young Akhimie of Ekpoma.

OSAWE, 1540: May be mentioned because he installed the first Enijie of Ebhosa and Ebhoato. Osa, the elder and more cantankerous was installed about 1545 and Oloọn of Ebhoato, taking a cue from the resistance of Ebhosa, was installed about five years later.

THE GREAT ODIA: He became the Onojie about 1810 and was a loved and much respected Onojie. It was during his reign that a great personal friendship started between the Oba of Benin and the Onojie of Ewohimi. It arose in this way.

Obanosa died in 1816 and soon after his two eldest sons, Eredia-Uwa who was first and Ogbebo the second, began to fight for the throne. A civil war broke out and in this Eredia-Uwa lost and knowing that his head would certainly have fallen to make his brother secure on the throne he had won by conquest, fled to Ebhoikimi. Despite the bribes of Ogbebo to the Enijie of Ishan, Eredia-Uwa's life was ably protected by Odia who gave him refuge. All attempts Ogbebo made through powerful agents were foiled by Odia's over-all protection for the Prince's life. After eight months another civil war broke out at Benin and the usurper, Ogbebo, with defeat and disgrace starring him in the face, destroyed everything in the Palace including himself by hanging.

Jubilant messengers were sent to Ebhoikimi to invite Eredia-Uwa home. He returned to Benin and was crowned OSEMWEDE in the latter part of 1816. The erstwhile fugitive in Ewohimi completely at the mercy of Odia, now became the Oba of Benin, the overlord of Ishan. The good change in his fortune did not make him forget the deep gratitude he owed to his protector Odia and the medicinemen of Ewohimi. His first act of reward was to give Odia and his successor the full right to use the full IDIGBA, the stiff coral bead neckwear, which originally meant to give the wearer a proud and disdainful look, made him look more like a man suffering from Torticollis than a mere victim of Pride! To this day the Onojie of Ewohimi still uses the Idigba on state occasions. Oba Osemwede is said to have given Odia the right to BA IGBẸN, that is, the full power to take any man forcefully as his servant, or any woman as a wife, single or married already. Every Onojie had this power which of course was limited to his own territory where he was lord of all he surveyed. No Oba could have given any Onojie the power to force a woman into his harem from another Onojie's domain. If any Onojie tried that he would have an inter-clan war in his hands before the Oba heard of his death!

Ifebho ascended the Ewohimi throne just as the Europeans were coming into Ishan with the result that his greatness was expended in bringing good things to Ewohimi rather than his greatness being measured by the degree of atrocities as of old. Eight years after his ascension the AGBOR — UBIAJA Main Road was opened and this went a long way to break the old isolation of this great country district. In 1918 the Ewohimi Native Court was established, thus confirming it as the judicial headquarters of Ishan 'B'.

When the tyrannical Ishan Enijie Council combining executive with judicial powers was founded in 1921, Ifebho of Ewohimi was one of the eight members. He died after a long reign of 31 years, at 5 o'clock of the morning of March 4th, 1931.

EWOHIMI — IBI RELATION:

The first ruler of Ibi was a patriline relative of Ewohimi. Osoah had the following sons: The most senior was IBI, then Agaah, Osa and Ato. Ibi unfortunately messed up with one of his father's wives;

Osoah, though aged, had continued to collect lovely women in his harem and verily had he been described as the type of women lover who if he knew the world was coming to an end tomorrow, would still be making preparations for a new wife today!

Ibi's lapse was therefore unfortunate and Osoah could not demand the usual maximum penalty; he was however banished from Ewohimi and he with his family founded Ibi. At Osoah's death, the second son Agaah, performed the burial ceremonies and succeeded his father.

ONOSEGBE II

In the place of the old oppressor, the Diplomat !

CHAPTER XXV

EWOSSA (Pop. 3,292)

1. History:

The correct name is ẸBHOSA or ẸBHOISA.

Despite the evil of modern mercenary politics, the blood tie between Ewohimi and Ewossa has survived the years. It is an unkind distortion of history for honest looking men in both Ewossa and Ewatto to say that this blood tie originated from Benin and that the founders of Ewohimi, Ewossa and Ewatto arrived Esan, men of equal calibre. It is one thing to claim and insist on absolute independence and quite another thing to use arguments not only baseless but calculated to wreck some of our beautiful traditions and rites.

The facts are that while the founder of Orikimi, IKIMI arrived Ishan about 1460, the founders of EBHOSA and EBHOATO were of IKIMI'S THIRD GENERATION — that is both were Ikimi's great grandchildren. Osa or Oisa was the second son, after the banishment of IBI, of Onojie Osoah of Orikimi. Between 1500 and 1504, when Prince Aruaruan was making his gigantic strength felt all around Benin, settlements on the Ishan side of River Ossiomo could never tell how many of their members would be kidnapped the next day. No one could really tell who was a genuine Benin Trader and who was an Aruaruan eye in the jungle, since traders, spies and slave raiders approached this part of Ishan via the Ossiomo route. To guard the Benin Approaches to Orikimi, a group of Ekakulo was stationed somewhere in the jungle. At the head of the men was Prince Osa. He with his warriors founded EBHOSA. By the time Osoah, Osa's father died about 1520, Osa's settlement was already growing.

When Agaah, his senior brother succeeded their father, both the inhabitants of Ebhosa and Ebhoato considered themselves members of Orikimi just as men in cottages consider themselves members of the village of their origin. The actual onset of bitterness was when Agaah died and Osawe became Onojie. A new king who did not realise that the people of Ebhosa were his own kith and kin, was the real trigger that started the Ewohimi — Ewossa feud. Osawe was in the habit of thinking of both Ebhosa and Ebhoato as outlying villages (IGULE) of Orikimi. With that state of mind, his people got into the offensive habit of seizing men from either place whenever a head was urgently required at Eguare Orikimi.

Ebhosa and Ebhoato retaliated as much as their inferior number would allow, but they began to think of themselves as a distinct people from Orikimi and began to assert that thought. Their insistence on their having their own Onojie became so disturbing that Osawe had to install Osa, Onojie of Ebhosa, and later Ato's heir, Oloon, Onojie of Ebhoato. This only eased matters in as much as at the end of the traditional year, people of the two places came down to Orikimi for the worship of their great father OSOAH who was deified. Traditionally all free-borns of Orikimi, Ebhoato and Ebhosa were strictly forbidden the sight of one another's blood, but with the inherent superiority of Orikimi and the irresistible urge to dominate the weaker settlements, skirmishes

were not infrequent and the men offending the spirit of Osoah justified their action by the consoling thought of provocation.

With growth in number came pride and increasing insubordination. Although Ebhosa had for long considered itself no longer a part of Orikimi, the perennial worship of Osoah at Eguare Orikimi and the going to Orikimi for the installation of a new Ebhosa Onojie, was not just admittance of inferiority but was the essential spirit of idiocy for a man claiming to be the constitutional head of an independent state. Thus when the great and wealthy ỌGBỌLE became Onojie of Ebhosa, he decided to find a master not just higher than himself but certainly towering above the Onojie of Orikimi. That only person was the Oba of Benin: Ogbole had one big advantage; Osemwede, who only four years previously, was a hibernating prince in Ishan, had become Oba of Benin and was ever ready to show his gratitude to any accredited leader from Esan. But he found himself in a most embarrassing position from which he could only wriggle out by virtue of his awe-inspiring station in life. Here was a leader, Ogbole, an undisputed head of a district that gave him implicit loyalty when he was so ably protected by the great Odia of Orikimi; but this same man was doing something to throw dust in the face of his own protector — Odia! If he installed Ogbole Onojie, he would be offending Odia, and if he refused to do so, Ogbole who served him so well, would be thoroughly disgraced. Well he was now OBA, the lord supreme of all Enijie anyway; further there were large gains topped with a human head, one slave. So Oba Osemwede accepted the necessary tributes from Ogbole, installed him Onojie and he was given the Ada or State Sword.

That practically brought Ebhosa to the same sovereign level as Orikimi and the only difference being that one was large and the other small. This was the state of affairs until the advent of the British in 1900. In 1903 when the Native Court was established at Uromi, IZEBHIJIE of Ebhosa attended the Court as a full sovereign just as did Ifebho of Ebhoikimi. Then circumstance brought Ebhosa once again under the heels of Ebhoikimi: In 1918 a Native Court was established in Ebhoikimi, thus making it the judicial headquarters for all Ishan 'B'. It was history repeating itself! Neither the re-organization of 1934 nor the McCall Constitution of 1950 could win back for Ebhosa all Ogbole had achieved in 1820. Back again went Ebhosa and Ebhoato— tied to the political apron-string of EBHOIKIMI!

Ewossa consists of six villages:—

1. EGUARE (425):
This is the ramification of Osa's original settlement.

2. UJIELU (356):
Was founded by ỌZA who led a party of immigrants from Egoro. He was made the first Ọniha. He was later joined by a Benin man called OGBẸ, the founder of IDUMOGBE. IKEKIYALA is an extension of these two quarters.

3. IDUMU-IYASELE (828):
This is the over-all name for IDUMAGBOR (434), where the Iyasele lives, IDUMỌBO, IDUNEGBON (394) and IDUMU-IGIBHEWA.

The Idumagbor-Idunegbon area was founded by OWERAIN, a warrior and blacksmith from Agbor. Idumọbo was founded by IHIẸNHIẸN, a renowned native doctor from Ebhoato.

4. IDUMEGHA (333):
This place was founded in the main by immigrants from Uromi.

5. IKEKOGBE (444):
This is the group name for IDUMUEKHAE, ODUGHA and OMHẸN; as usual Ikekogbe was the place where the Onojie's servants and slaves used to live. Thus it invariably was an extension of Eguare.

6. IDUMUOGO (462):
Customarily some farm houses develop into villages when the farmers cease to return home to the village, hence Idumuogo is a frequent name in all districts of Ishan. The farmers who founded this particular one came from Eguare.

II. Kingmakers :
Two quarters of Eguare — OLENỌKHUA and UHAẸKPẸN — constitute the kingmakers' quarters in Ewossa.

III. Installation :
In recent times, the habit in Ewossa is for the Oniha to arrive Eguare to install the heir five days after the death of the last Onojie. Then he must begin the burial ceremonies at once, for should he die before he completes them his children forfeit the claim to the title. This departure from Ishan custom was an attempt to off-set succession strife and to quicken completion of all the essential ceremonies that would make the new man the lawful Onojie.

IV. Genealogical Tree:

IKIMI from UZEBU — 1460.
1
ALAAN, First Onojie of ORIKIMI, 1463.
1
OSOAH, 1480.
1

1	1	1	1
IBI	AGAAH, 1520	ỌSA, 1545	ATO

1
ANYI, 1555.
1
IJIEKHIJIE (Forgotten Names)
1
ỌMỌKHUALE
1
EBAZUA
1
OLEGHE
1
OGBẸIDE I.
1
ỌGBỌLE, 1820.
1
ỌDIA, 1850.
1
IZẸBHIJIE, 1870.
1
OBỌBỌIKI, 1939.
1
OGBẸIDE II, 1947.

V. Comments:

(a) OGBOLE (1820—1850): Was the first Onojie to make the real bid for freedom from Ewohimi. He was installed Onojie by Oba Osenwede about four years after he himself left Ishan. He returned home the possessor of the coveted ADA—"Same as the Onojie of Ewohimi Had!"

(b) ODIA (1850—1870): He was the ruler of Ewossa during the Amahor War. Ewossa like Ewohimi and Okalo remained faithful to Oba Adolo during these risings.

(c) IZEBHIJIE (1870—1939): Had many things to his advantage. He became Onojie as a young man of about 18, and full of youth he had one aim—to make Ewossa independent in everything and owing allegiance only to the Oba. Fortune gave him a very important friend in 1898. During the Benin Expedition of 1897 PRINCE AIGUOBASIMWI took refuge at URHONIGBE in Benin. When enemies, mostly chiefs, who wanted to get him out of the way so that they could usurp the privileges that were the Oba's, kept lying against him that he was preparing to return battle with the white men, Aigubasimwi wisely decided

to leave Benin with its intrigues and greedy chiefs seeking favour from the British. On his way to his mother's home at OKUTA EBELLE he got to Ewossa where he passed the night with Chief UWADIA. Next day a man called ATAKPO led him to Ebelle where he was taken to his mother's village. He very simply narrated his misfortunes at Benin and expressed his desire to live in private and in peace. Okuta, like Ebelle, thought that with the white man now firmly established in Benin, the OBA'S WORLD was gone and so they thought there was very little likelihood of Aguobasimwi ever returning to Benin City. With this in mind some of them thought that if he stayed he might so dominate them as to enslave them. Unbelievably, they announced their regret and showed the unhappy Prince the door. Mortified the Prince returned to Ebhosa where he had been shown so much kindness the night before. He was given a comfortable place to live in at Uwadia's house. He lived here for about one year, and here he had a daughter named UBHINESAN. During this humiliating period of exile, the experienced Izebhijie, gave the Prince the services of an overlord, and in 1914 when Aguobasimwi became Oba Eweka II, he sent for the Onojie who was accompanied by Atakpo and Ọijade. He loaded him with presents and issued him with a second Ada.

Izebhijie's contemporaries were Eromosele of Irrua, Imadojiemu of Opoji etc.

VI. Present Onojie:

Is OGBẸIDE II, aged, about 42. After the short reign of his father he became Onojie in 1947.

VII. Non-Aggression Pact :

There was a natural understanding between the people of Ebhosa and Ewohimi and also Ewatto, due to their blood relationship — but during the bitter struggle for independence, blood was freely spilled to the horror of their ancestors! There were several wars with Ekpon and Ebelle.

CHAPTER XXVI

EWATTO (Pop. 4,204)

I. History:

The correct name is ẸBHOATO.

The founder of Eguare was the youngest of OSOAH'S four principal sons, IBI, AGAAH, OSA and ATO. Ato was a man with an avid interest in hunting which made him more at home in the bush than in Eguare with its hustle and bustle which invariably brought his nerves on edge.

When he went ahunting he and his colleagues used to keep their equipment and belongings in a cottage, and after hunting, they returned home with their kills. As he grew more independent he spent longer days in the cottage until by the time his father died about 1520, his only strong connection with home was cut. That was the real beginning of Ato's settlement. As the settlement grew its people started to think and act rather independently of Orikimi and so began to agitate for home rule. Round about 1550 Osawe installed OLOON, Ato's heir, the first Onojie of Ebhoato.

EGUARE (354):
This was Ato's original settlement.

OGBE (563):
This place was founded by people from different parts, Uromi, Agbor and Emu, but the very first settlement was founded by IYARE.

UHONMOEBHO was founded by descendants of Ato, with early settlers from Agbede and Ehanlen Ewu, some thirty years after Ehanlen Oniha founders left Ehanlen Ekpoma.

ABHURU was founded by OHUNGBA, one of Ato's sons. Later immigrants from Benin founded IDUMEDO quarter (153).

In addition to the Uzebu origin of Ato's predecessors, there is a cause for the strong connection between Ezomo of Benin and Ewohimi area in general, and Ewatto in particular. The first issue, a boy, Oba Ewuakpe had called IDOVA, and the mother, a woman of very low origin, came from Abhuru in Ewatto. Round about 1700 and in his teens, Idova found his way to Ewatto, where he grew up a strong and powerful leader. He later went back to Benin when his father had died and his legitimate brother had become AKENZUA I. Idova who later became IHENUA, carved a proud name for himself in Benin history by his daring exploits in many wars. He was rewarded with the Ezomo title, a title which became hereditary in Benin right from him. As a great and influential man, Ihenua, now in Benin, did not forget the place of his childhood. His frequent reference to Ebhoato increased Akenzua I's interest in this part of Esan Country and a stronger bond of friendship was superimposed upon the fact that Ezomo's Uzebu was the ancestral home of Ewohimi area.

II. Kingmakers:

The elders of Egbele-Ibhieranmen form the Kingmakers in Eguare.

III. Installation:

Until the arrival of the British round about 1900, Ewohimi maintains that the Onojie of Ewatto like that of Ewossa, were sectional Enjie, under the tutelage of the Onojie of Ewohimi, and that there was no direct homage paid to the Oba by these Enijie. This was because the first Onojie of each place was installed by the Onojie of Ewohimi. These assertions were true during the early period in the history of Ewossa and Ewatto, but early in the 19th century, they were no longer true. Even by 1750 both places had begun to enjoy almost complete independence and after Ihenua became Akenzua I's Ezomo, Ewatto began to find her way to Benin direct. In the case of Ewossa, Ewohimi's suzerainty came to an end when Ogbole went direct to Oba Osemwede about 1820.

IV. Genealogical Tree:

OSOAH, 2nd. Onojie of Ewohimi, 1480.

IBI	AGAAH	OSA	ATO, 1520.

ATO, 1520.
ỌLỌỌN, 1st. Onojie, 1550.
IJIEKHIJIE (Forgotten Names)
OMIDUA
OGBẸIDE
ỌBO
ABAKU
UWAGBALE
USIFO The Peaceful, 1880.
EKARIA
ỌMẸNLIMẸN I
ỌMẸNLIMẸN II, Mar. 1953.

V. Non-Aggression Pacts:

Ewatto, by virtue of consanguinity, has been on peaceful terms with Ewohimi and Ewossa. Her traditional enemy was Ohordua. They were always at each other's throat until about 1880 when Usifo the Peaceful became the Onojie of Ewatto. He negotiated peace with Uwaifo the Peacemaker of Ohordua and an Okoven was established to forbid the sight of each other's blood!

CHAPTER XXVII

EKPON (Pop 3,747)

I. History:

During the Idah War one of the Benin Warriors, called IJIE, was very much impressed with the expanse of virgin jungle teeming with wild animals in the Esan country. I could get no confirmatory story to some of the Elders' suggestion that Ije was an Oba's son and a hunter who left Benin in disgust because his father used to confiscate all the animals he had killed while hunting. The Oba who lived at this time was Esigie and it is difficult to believe that a son of the Obas of those proud days could degrade the Palace by partially living in the jungle in pursuit of animals for food, and that the Oba could hanker after the carcasses, some several days old, that the hunter-son brought home.

Ijie was no Oba's son but simply a Bini who had already seen the Esan country during the Idah expedition. It was his interest in hunting that made him find his way to Esan and the place he wanted to settle in was Uda's Ekpoma. Instead of the same game he was used to at Benin, he found the forests teeming with Elephants. To these he went after in an insatiable manner. All he wanted from them really were the beautiful but expensive tusks. The elephant is so large that one could not kill one without the whole neighbourhood knowing of it and with that, the news went straight to the Onojie, who at this time was OJIEKHERE. No sooner Ijie arrived home than Ojiekhere's Iko (messengers) would arrive demanding not one but all the tusks as tributes to the Onojie — owner of the land. This went on until in exasperation Ijie decided to get into the jungle where he could enjoy the fruits of his labour. He moved south in search of a spot removed from tribute maniacs.

At a spot lying between the young settlement of Osa, headed by Onojie Anyi, and Igbanke, he pitched his hut surrounded by a few of his grown up sons who were able to go through with the long trek.

It is said that on his dying bed, many years after, when he was giving his children his last blessings and words of advice, he admonished them to remember their home which he said was EKPON —, but the last breath went out of him before he could complete the word EKPOMA.

The affinity between Ekpon and Ekpoma was maintained by a peaceful relation and another link of the old association is represented by the fact that the old man and his family carried forwards some of the habits they had got used to at Ekpoma, for example, they continued to have their main buying day — on the same first day of the Farm Week.

Ekpon consists of:—

EGUARE (438) :

This with ORENOKHUA and IDUMUJE as components, of course, grew out of the settlement Ijie himself founded round about 1555. Ijie himself was no Onojie, it was with the growth of the settlement that one of his descendants was said to have gone to Benin for his installation as Onojie.

IGODUMA (521) :

This quarter was founded by some of Ijie's children, to be enlarged

by the later arrival of the children of AKASAN. Here the Oniha of Ekpon is found.

OGBE (184) :
This is the traditional home of the Esogban and was founded by the children of Akasan.

IKPUDU (232) :
Was founded by immigrants from Eguare and thus many of them are descendants of Ijie. Some of the early settlers were Tsekiri Elephant hunters who had had a camp at Ijie's settlement.

EKU (247):
Was an EKO camp. It started during Ogbole's time. Here is the traditional home of the Iyasele.

II. Kingmakers :
Eguare and the Ijie Descendants' quarter of IGODUMA form the Kingmakers of Ekpon.

III. Installation is performed by the Oniha.

IV. Genealogical Tree :

IJIẸ—from Benin via Ekpoma, 1555.
|
AKASAN
|
IJIEKHIJIE (Forgotten Names)
|
ỌRỌMILA
|
OJIEGBEDU
|
OJIEMẸN
|
ỌGBỌLE
|
UWAGBALE
|

USIFO	OBUBỌIKI, Regent.
ẸDOBỌR	

V. Comments:

I have been quite unable both here and in Benin City to get any information of whether any of the rulers of Ekpon ever was installed Onojie formally by the Oba of Benin, but today, in accordance with Ishan custom, the accredited head of Ekpon is ONOJIE.

VI. Present Onojie:

The present Onojie is HONOURABLE EDOBOR, who was a minor still having his primary education at Ubiaja Catholic School when his father Usifo died. His uncle IRE or OBUBOIKI acted as a Regent during the period of his minority. He took over the reins of office in the early twenties.

Edobor, a man of great energy, to a stranger presents the appearance of aggressiveness, but to those who know him intimately he is an enthusiastic worker, sticky to a cause he is convinced of and has a dignified faithfulness to his friends. He succeeded in the 1951 election and became an honourable member of the Western House of Chiefs.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EBELLE (Pop. 5,238)

I. History:

At the time I collected materials for this work Ebelle consisted of

(a) EGUARE (893):

The Ruling family quarter was founded by AGBABHOKO, the incorrigible first son of the Ruler of ORHU, the Benin nomenclature for KWALE, near the present UTAGBA UNO. His cup of sins got overflowing when he seized his father's wife, an abomination in the land. The elders had a hurried meeting and to save his life, he was handed an empty palm wine calabash — the traditional way of saying, "May your shadow never darken our doorway again!" It was banishment and he had to choose that or sure death; so he wandered into the jungle across Benin to reach the present site of Eguare. Soon people began to flock to him when his friends in Orhu heard of his whereabouts. He later went to Benin to be created Onojie of the new settlement.

This Agbabhoko settlement was founded about 1510, shortly before the Idah War but well after the founding of the settlements at Irrua, Uromi, Ekpoma, Ubiaja etc. The first big waves of rebels who deserted Benin City between 1460 and 1463 included the founding fathers of Kwale from where a Prince came to start a settlement in the present Ebelle area. This was after Kwale itself had grown into an orderly settlement with its own ruler — a recognized unit in the Benin Empire.

One great leader called ẸBỌ was sent from Orhu to recall Agbabhoko who had by now begun to enjoy a peaceful rule of his followers. Instead he convinced Ebo to remain and this man founded IDUMẸBỌ quarter.

In Ebelle the Iyasele and the Uwague are found in Eguare.

(b) IDUMOWU (1,038):

This place was founded by some of the Benin Princes who came via USE on the Benin – Siluko Road, and the descendants are still greeted today with IBHIỌBA N'USE! (Oba's children of Use, Hail!)

One quarter of this village did not trace its origin from Benin; IDUMUOKHUẸ founders migrated from Ohordua and came to form the immediate bond of friendship between Ohordua and Ebelle. Another reminder of the Princely origin of the founders of Idumowu is the custom of the women still greeting with LAMOGUN. This village is the traditional home of EZOMO OLOGHO.

(c) OKUTA (940):

One of the early quarters that grew round Agbabhoko's settlement was Okuta. The incessant unrest in Benin that got to its fiercest during the succession strife of 1505 — between Esigie who a year before had ascended the Benin throne and his colossus of a brother, Aruaruan, made a large body of Binis leave the city in quest of peace. They founded a settlement in ONITSHA. Reaching there some found to their horror that those of them who left Benin preaching republicanism as it were only a short while back, were in the new settlement surpassing the Oba

in atrocities and nepotism. So they packed their belongings and headed for the jungle to found scattered settlements. A good part of these rebels amongst rebels got to Ebelle via ONITSHA OLONA, and were the founders of Okuta. The Oniha is found in this village.

(d) OKPUJE (933):
This village was founded in the main by visiting strangers and traders to Ebelle hence their inclusive name of IDUMU-EKHẸN. Two of the well known traders to settle here first were ỌNA and ẸGBỌ. Many of these traders were Binis travelling to such places as Amahor, Ewohimi, Ohordua etc., for exchange of goods.

(e) OLOGHE (488):
This was the expanded Idumebo founded by Ebo, the converted Ambassador from Orhu. This is the traditional home of EZOMO N'UTI.

(f) IDUMU-OKALO (946):
According to Ebelle, the founders came to find Ebelle people in their present site and classify the people of Okalo with Idumuekhen with whom they have a common Odion and Iluobo at their OKHIRARE. They perform their burial ceremonies for the same Egbele. They top their argument by defining the name OKALO (literarily, as the man in front) as a name that arose from the habit of putting the Okalo founders always in front when Ebelle was on the war path. They merited this 'honour' because they were all dauntless warriors ideal for testing the strength and ferocity of the enemy!

II. Present Onojie:

The present Onojie, H. H. IGBENIJIE, was Akhimie's second son. Luck brought him onto the Ebelle throne when his senior brother, ỌMỌ-VUỌN trifled with native laws and custom. He was installed Onojie as a young man in 1910 and today, is the oldest Onojie, both in his age and length on the throne. He is a quiet, unassuming but calculating man, this latter characteristic making it near impossible ever to get a direct answer from him on any matter. Before he became the Onojie Ebelle was famous for its being the judicial centre for Igueben, Ugbegun, Ewossa, Ekpon, Ewatto and Ewohimi, practically seizing the central piece of Ishan 'B' from the latter, when this court was opened. Feeling that with Court go litigations and unrest, this noiseless ruler, himself, worked actively towards the closure of the Ebelle Court and voted enthusiastically for the shifting of this house of troubles to Ewohimi, and then, in Igbenijie's own words — "ẸBHOKIMI DA MẸN GHI IBỌN MẸDIN!" (Ewohimi made me face hell on earth!) Every movement of the quiet Igbenijie was a breach of the white man's law which, of course, he did not know, and could not know if and when he was being accused falsely. Fines! They came from right, left and centre, all calculated to humiliate him! That broke the Onojie's spirits and down went Ebelle's original fame. Ebelle's loss became Ewohimi's gain!

He started regaining his lost grounds as decentralization progressed. Ebelle has since severed all connections with Ewohimi and is, in fact,

the administrative centre for the Ebelle, Amahor, Ogwa, Ugun and Ujiogba Federation.

III. Kingmakers:

Consist of the elders of the IDUMU-IBHIJIE of Eguare or the Egbele of Ruling Family. Though Idumebo of Ologhe came to install the Odion in Eguare and Eguare does the same thing in that village, when it comes to matters of the Onojie title, Idumebo is not concerned.

IV. Installation:

The method of installation at Ebelle goes to prove the uniformity in importance of the Burial Ceremonies as a legal step to inheritance. Though the method is that of the throne never being vacant, as soon as the Onojie dies the Idumuibhijie quickly assemble and the undisputed heir is entrusted with the care of the Palace. After the dead Onojie has been traditionally washed and interred in the official EGUN or Agaah, the first and most vital part of the Burial rites must be started *at once*. This stage is called IHEVIẸ, the Utare of most parts of Ishan. Though the rest of the rites can be postponed in Ebelle, (in fact in the olden days when there was not so much fear of strifes over the title, it was customary in Ebelle to begin the rest of the Burial Ceremonies after three years), only a FOOL tried to put off the all important ceremony of IHEVIE. Without it neither the throne nor the Palace property is the heir's and if he dies, all rights to both pass from his own children to his own brother.

THE CEREMONY OF IHEVIE:

It is in two parts and the whole ceremony is valueless unless both parts are completed. The first part consists of slaughtering two cows for the Idumuibhijie and the second part called EMEDIỌN (Edion's Foufou) consists of feasting all the Edion of Ebelle. Two cows are used for this second part and a highly respectful Osugba with plenty of beef is prepared for Idumowu, Okuta, Okpuje and Oleghe. One Osugba each is for the Edion, Igene and Edan (Ọkwian) of Eguare. For Idumu-Okalo, raw yams and meat replace the foufou which the other villages and quarters of Ebelle customarily receive. In their own case the yams and meat are sent onto them at home.

With the Ihevie done the vital stage of the burial ceremonies is completed. In essence the Ihevie is equivalent to the concentrated rites which are over in 5—7 days. The heir is now full Onojie and should he die the right to succession remains with his own line.

The new Onojie now prepares for the other parts which though are essential, are not of such over-riding importance. This is the equivalent of three months feasting and rejoicing in the rest of Ishan. In Ebelle after the Ihevie, the next three years are used to prepare for this grand feasting on successful assumption of the title. This preparation in the olden days consisted of

(a) IKHIO or war dance by Eguare, Idumowu, Okuta, Okpuje and Oleghe followed by

(b) Touring of the villages — looting and plundering.

Anywhere the Onojie saw a beautiful girl, he snatched her as a wife, and any handsome boy was taken home to become one of his EMUADA

(State Sword bearers). At the end of the third year the new Onojie had now enriched himself considerably from his unabashed plundering. During this period too, official mourning is kept for the late Onojie. All ceremonial body tattoo is stopped and anyone whose wife had come of age during this period, must take her out of Ebelle to perform her body tattoo, for should he perform this ceremony in Ebelle during this forbidden period, his bride automatically became the Onojie's wife. No house building was allowed during this period; similarly all feasts that fell during the period had to pass uncelebrated.

The actual ceremonies in this second part last nine days. The Onojie uses two cows and his immediate brothers particularly the second and third, may use a cow each if they can afford it. The rest of the grown up sons use a goat each. The ceremonies are all designed to enable the new monarch to collect more booties from the subjects only too anxious to be in the good books of the new tyrant!

ACTUAL INSTALLATION:

This is performed by the most senior of the IDUMUIBHIJIE, and in Ebelle custom he is the Onojie's Osukhure. After the blessings at the ancestral shrine he is counted on the inner throne by this elder.

V. Genealogical Tree:

AGBABHOKO, Prince from ORHU, 1510.
1
IDIGBA
1
OKOIRERE
1
OKISI
1
IMI
1
ENỌHỌNMIJE
1
IYUARE
1
OSAWẸMẸN
1
OGUN, 1800
1
OGBẸIDE, 1849
1
AKHUEGHU, 1880
1
AKHIMIẸ, 1899
1

1 — ỌMỌVUỌN, 1907

1 — IGBENIJIE, 1910.

VI. Comments:

(a) OGUN, 1800 — 1849:

Ogun, like his immediate two successors, was a noted warrior. In 1818 when Oba Osemwede was involved in the Akure War, the cry for help reached Ebelle and Ogun jumped at the chance to have plenty of fighting — a fitting desire in view of his name OGUN (Iron Man or War). Some women prisoners were brought home from that campaign, for example, the late mother of AMU, Ogunẹ the mother of ASA and Egumẹdia. They lived, married and died in Ebelle.

(b) OGBEIDE, 1849 — 1880:

This Onojie's name is best known in connection with the Amahor War of 1853—1854. Ogbeide had thrown his weight on Ogbewekon's side, like Igueben — but a majority of Ishan Enijie, supporting their overlord, Oba Adolo, Ogbeide soon found himself alone. The forces of Ogbewekon were routed and the Onojie of Ebelle and his Eguare were sacked. — Ogbeide fled to OZA, near Ogada in Benin.

(c) AKHUEGHU, 1880—1899: AND THE OGWA WAR, 1884:

This Onojie is today remembered mainly because of the Ogwa War which was fought a few years after he became ruler of Ebelle. The cause of this war was the seizure of his maternal sister, ẸIHE, by the people of Ogwa. The woman was however returned to Akhueghu, but soon after, some Ogwa people passing through Eguare Ebelle to Okuta began to sing taunting songs in which the refrain was ẸIGBE ENI ODẸ! (No one has ever successfully stopped an elephant on its path!) Eguare informants took this to mean that despite the fact that Ogwa had seized a woman from Eguare they could still pass in and out as they pleased. They worked up the Onojie's temper and soon he was on the war path. To Okuta he went and attacked the singers. There was a bitter fighting in which Ogbebo of Eguare was killed and several of the Ogwa minstrels found themselves slaves at Ebelle.

Akhueghu was the Onojie when Ebelle humiliated Prince Aiguobasimwi, by refusing him sanctuary when he was at his bitterest moments in 1898.

(d) AKHIMIE: His contemporaries in the rest of Ishan were Eromosele of Irrua, Imadojiemu of Opoji, Ediale of Ekpoma, Obomese of Ewohimi and Elabor I of Ubiaja. He died in 1907.

(e) OMOVUON, 1907—1910:

On the death of Akhimie, his heir, the carefree OMOVUON, was installed Onojie; he began the all-important IHEVIE at once, but like the careless man he was, he completed part one of the ceremony and forgot all about the second part: he did not prepare EMEDION! Three years after, death struck unexpectedly. In the eyes of the vigilant kingmakers of Ebelle, Omovuon had been nothing but a caretaker of the Palace since he did not perform the vital First Stage of the Burial Ceremony. The right to inheritance of the family property and the claim to the Onojie title passed NOT TO OMOVUON'S HEIR BUT TO OMOVUON'S NEXT BROTHER — IGBENIJIE, the present Onojie. Wisely, Igbenijie, whom luck brought into prominence, quickly set about the important ceremonies and the right to succession passed forever from Omovuon's line.

CHAPTER XXIX

OKALO (Pop. 946)

Now a word about this territory which Ebelle call IDUMUOKALO with a vengeance! Although in modern political set-up, Okalo is a village within Ebelle, it has never submitted to the suzerainty of Ebelle as far as history goes: it has consistently been a most protesting vassal since the reorganization of 1934.

The present mode of life of the people has been woven on a pattern handed down from generation, and all over, Okalo could be seen to be quite different from Ebelle, and I feel personally that until this is recognized, not only will the people of Okalo form an unhappy and unwilling partner but peace will be impossible between the two districts.

Some fairly disinterested people in Ewohimi, Ewossa, Amahor and Igueben confirmed a story I heard again and again at Okalo, that the Onojie of Okalo was really the dominant personage in the area until Oba Ovonramwen married IKHAGHE who was known in Benin as EGHAGHE. Akhilọ of Okuta Ebelle was a renowned warrior, famous in Ishan here and equally respected in Benin City. Of course when the Oba heard of him, he felt that since the best of everything should be found at the Capital, Akhilo should come over to live in Benin, but the warrior who unlike the great Enowe of Ugboha during Oba Ewuare's time, had already got deep roots in Okuta, preferred to remain an Ishan man. Ovonramwen attempted to outwit him by asking for the hand of his beautiful daughter in marriage, knowing that with his daughter in Benin, Akhilo would frequent the City and gradually he might be grounded there. Thus the Oba married a simple but innocently beautiful Ishan called IKHAGHE which in Ishan means, "When I behold what the world does, I wonder!" Despite what many members of the Royal House of Iwebo told me at Benin that Aiguobasimwi, later Eweka II, had a mother who was the daughter of the Onojie of Ekho in Benin Division, I found irrefutable evidence here in Ishan that Ikhaghe was a native of Okuta Ebelle. There is no shame in speaking the truth which in this case is that Eweka II's mother was no Princess but a girl from a humble home. Appropriately we have an Ishan saying, ỌVIẸNBIỌBA (A slave or a lowly woman is the mother of the great Oba!)

All these are by the way — what concerns us in the birth of Aiguobasimwi is the inference that when Ovonramwen married an Ebelle woman the tie between Ebelle and Benin became very strong and when that woman became the mother of an Oba, well it was a walkover for the Onojie of Ebelle over Okalo!

The inference is wrong because it is unsupported by facts of history. In fact what did happen was the exact opposite of what these friends of Okalo would have us believe. In 1898, Prince Aiguobasimwi, with his father deported to Calabar and he himself, a victim of intrigues amongst favour-seeking chiefs in Benin, decided to seek peace and asylum in his mother's home, Ebelle. At Ewossa he was directed to Akhueghu, then Onojie of Ebelle. The Onojie followed him to Okuta but to the Prince's chagrin, Okuta and the Onojie, full of suspicion, refused to give him sanctuary. He left Ebelle disappointed and bitter. It would be unimaginable to think that this ill-used Prince on becoming Oba later, would have done much in the way of raising Akhueghu or his successors' status. If anything, he would have supported Ebelle's rivals.

What then is the true position between Ebelle and Okalo? Historically, though Ebelle authorities pretend not to know the exact origin of Okalo, they are aware fully that they had no relationship with the people of Orhu or Utagba. With the exception of OLOKUMI Quarter of Amahor, Okalo forms the oldest aboriginal settlement in the present federation of which Ebelle is centre. Its founders led by ENANATA, were some of the war-weary Binis who left Uzebu during the Esigie — Aruaran tussle of 1504. It was therefore already in existence when Agbabhoko came from Orhu to found Eguare Ebelle, long before the people of Ogwa Ruling Family fled to Ebelle led by Ohonsi, the many quarters collected round Izegbo's settlement which grew into Idumọbo Ujiogba during the time of his successors — Ileh, Oyakhire, Izebhijie etc., and long before Ugun became a flourishing settlement after its population had been boosted by the fleeing Ezen people. In the area where all these districts are, OKALO is indeed the first, and its name just means that! It is untrue that its people got this name because as warriors they were the people Ebelle put forward always to bear the first shock of battle! In fact there was no war in which they fought on the same side as Ebelle. Truly they were warriors and as far as Ebelle was concerned, they were terrible warriors! From the time Ebelle came, and not satisfied with eclipsing those they had found but trying to eliminate them altogether, the indigenous settlers of Okalo had given the new but superior comers, constant headache, and not even the long years or exchange of daughters in marriages has been able to lower the fever of Okalo-Ebelle hatred.

Fewer in number and out to avoid the dominating attitude of Ebelle, they moved further into the jungle and their original UGHE, just behind the present Ebelle market, is marked today by their Edion or OKHIRARE. Look at some of the vital ceremonies connected with the highest institution in Ebelle — that of Onojie. Tradition or custom is what has been handed down from generation to generation amongst a growing community. If that be so, then one can easily see that Okalo has never been anything but an unwilling, numerically inferior being coerced under the tutelage of Ebelle by their inarticulation and lack of forceful leadership.

It is the custom of Ebelle for the new successor to perform the IHEVIE Ceremony before the inheritance is legal. That is vitally important to the institution of Onojie in Ebelle. The traditionally important EMEDION consists of OSUGBEMA each for the Edion of Eguare, Igene and Edan or married Eguare daughters, then one Osugba of foufou each for Idumowu, Okuta, Okpuje and Oleghe. TO OKALO ARE SENT YAMS AND RAW MEAT! Why this exception? Before the Onojie sets out on his looting tour of the district, there is IKHIO Dance staged by Eguare, Idumowu, Okuta, Okpuje and Oleghe, with OKALO CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT! If Okalo was really a part of Ebelle, by tradition, custom could not have prescribed different treatments for her. The answer to the question above supports my contention. Okalo would never eat any food cooked or sent from Ebelle — their traditional enemy who ousted them from their ancestral site; so as a sign of good faith the yams and meat were sent raw to allay their suspicious minds about poisoning.

In support of above is the fact that over the ages and particularly after the arrival of the British when disputes ceased being settled by inter-tribal wars, Okalo had made several futile bids for freedom, but the power and brightness of the Onojie of Ebelle had been such that the

government officers in whose hands a redress was sought, saw and heard only from Ebelle leaving Okalo, humbled and defeated in the shadow of inferior numbers, and the misfortune of having no articulate leader.

The result then is that the suffocating influence Ebelle could exert on Okalo by sheer weight of numbers was further enhanced when the all-powerful Native Court was established in Ebelle in 1927 where the Onojie of Ebelle waxed in grandeur and recognition as Sole Native Authority; wisdom compelled the struggling people of Okalo to lie low lest they be exterminated altogether. For quite a long time therefore, they lived with their Onojie more of a respected Elder than a Ruler, and remained the inwardly tormenting subjects or IDUMU of Ebelle.

This, in addition to the senile ẸHIRẸMẸN who has been ruling since 1892, explains the fewness of the Enijie that have ruled as such in Okalo.

I have narrated the facts of history as they appeared to me — I am less concerned with whether Okalo people are now numerically capable of living as a distinct group under the customary Ishan head — ONOJIE. Facts of history are such that we cannot reasonably just dismiss the claim of Okalo as nonsense or merely refuse to believe the existence of the place as a separate chiefdom before the arrival of the white man. Saliently are:—

I. When Enanata's refugees left Uzebu round about 1504, there were only two settlements — AMAHOR and EZEN in the present South-west Federation. These settlements were founded during the mass exodus of Binis during Oba Ewuare's time. Ezen was then in an area situated between present Ebelle and Igueben. The incessant expeditions of Prince Aruaran which were more of slave raids than actual wars on definite enemies, caused the first shift of Ezen to an area today lying between Amahor and Ugun. That was about 1500. Thus when Enanata's party arrived in 1504, the land they settled on was the original Ezen territory.

II. The friction between Ebelle, the large body of newcomers and Okalo, the simple-living people they found, led to such bitterness and war that IDEAMỌLUA, who became Onojie of Okalo about 1790 during the reign of Oba Akengbuda, decided to put some distance between the two incompatible communities, and so Okalo shifted further into the jungle to their present site, about 1795. IDUMUOHẸN which they left behind is now swallowed up by Idumowu of Ebelle.

III. When Eredia-Uwa sought protection under the great Odia of Ewohimi in 1816, all Ishan Enijie supported his claim and Ideamolua's services were particularly remembered by Eredia-Uwa when he became Oba Osemwede. When the same Oba needed the help of his faithful Ishan Enijie, Ideamolua, flanked by warriors like EBEWE, AKPAN, OBHIORA, ENAIHO and a host of Ekakulo which Okalo had in abundance, himself took part in the Akure War.

IV. Okalo has always had its own Eguare and titles like Oniha, Iyasele, Ezomo etc., which it could not have had were it an Idumu in Ebelle. Also supporting Okalo as a Partner and against its being a customary vassal is the appointment of UKẸKI (Market Chief) of Ebelle Market. There were always two such chiefs — one from Ebelle and the other from Okalo. Until the retirement of aged ODẸ of Okalo this was so. Ode had acted in this capacity with IKHILE and Ogun of Ebelle.

V. To come to modern history, when the Native Court was established in Uromi in 1903, Ehiremen who had already been 11 years Onojie of Okalo, Akhimie of Ebelle and Izebhijie of Amahor were some of the Enijie who attended from the present Federation. From Uromi, they switched to Ekpoma, then Ewohimi Native Court in 1918, and in 1927 when Ebelle became the judicial headquarters of the area, poor Okalo faced a slow but definite downward motion of attretion under the grinding heels of Ebelle majority.

We can now consider in detail OKALO as a unit with more patience and sympathy:

Okalo consists of:—

(a) EGUARE which was founded by the original Enanata Party.
(b) UHAEKPEN was founded by people from Uhaekpen near Uzebu in Benin.
(c) OMHEN was founded by two men, OMHEN and OBUNUGU, both being later arrivals from Uzebu.
(d) IDUMUOSAWELE was founded by Osawele Izegbo, descendant of one of the Benin leaders.
(e) IDUMUIKHILE was founded by an Ezen man called IKHILE. He was married to an Okalo woman, but when Ezen had its last blow and was scattered, Ikhile and his wife fled to Okalo.
(f) IDUMUOGO arose from a farm house started by OZUA, one of the Uzebu settlers.
(g) IDUMUISE was founded by IMỌWELE one of the Enanata followers.

Okalo had the same origin and hence the same Egbele as Okpuje of Ebelle and Idumuohen of Idumowu; with Okpuje, the collective name is EGBE-EKHEN. They celebrate their yearly festival called IKWẸ-KWẸ together and perform burial ceremonies as one Egbele.

The Odion title is taken at the Edion or Okhirare.

Genealogical Tree:

Bini Refugees under

ENANATA, 1504.
1
ỌBABỌ
1
EDIALE
1
OBHIỌRIA
1
ISẸMỌKHẸN
1
OKUỌKẸ
1
IDEAMỌLUA, 1790.
1
OGBỌMỌIDE, 1840.
1
EBOJẸ
1
ẸHIRẸMẸN, 1892.

CHAPTER XXX

AMAHOR (Pop. 2,569)

I. History:

Amahor consists of the following villages:—

1. Eguare
2. Obodeko
3. Idumogo
4. Ogo
5. Ugbekhae
6. Ago Ora
7. Ago Edo
8. Idunbelegha
9. Ago Izekọ
10. Ago Ogwa

} All Form Amahor Waterside.

Amahor was one of the earliest settlements in the present South-west Federation of Ebelle, Amahor, Ogwa, Ugun, Ujiogba with Okalo tied to the political apron-string of Ebelle. The very first unit in Amahor is not Eguare but OLOKUMI quarter of Idunbelegha. The people of this quarter were some of the refugees who fled the great Benin City round about 1460. This small habitation of Olokumi was the settlement found by the large body of immigrants who left UTE ỌKPU near IDUMUJE UGBOKO and UMUNẸDE, round about 1508. With their large number and their oneness they soon settled down to orderly life and it was a matter of a few years before they swallowed up Olokumi as a part of their settlement. This large and more flourishing settlement of a more assertive people under a virile leader called ẸWẸRỌẸ, grew to be the executive and judicial headquarters — Eguare — of the whole area. The protective juju called ỌZA which the newcomers brought with them also became the common ẸBỌ for the whole Amahor.

Obodeko: IDUMUEVIẸNỌBA part was founded by immigrants from Ukpenu in Ekpoma during the troubles that followed the ỌLỌWEMẸN fight for the Ekpoma throne. This settlement was swelled by refugees from the exterminated chiefdom of Ezen, during the Amahor War of 1853. The Iyasele and Ezomo are found here.

Idumogo: Edohen's quarter was founded by ẸZẸGHO, a Bini from Oza near Ogada, while EGBESAN portion was founded by Igueben people.

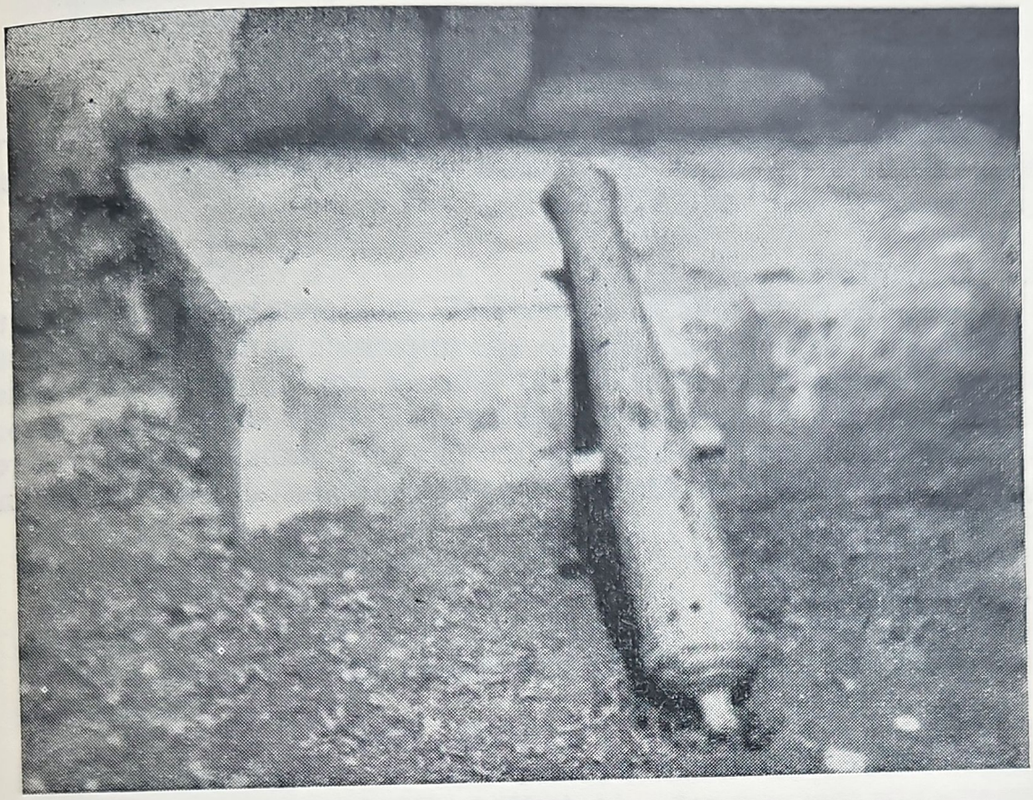
Ogo: The upper part was founded by some of the dissatisfied immigrants who had left ONITSHA OLONA same time as the founders of Okuta Ebelle. IDUMUATA section came from EKA while IDUMEDO portion was founded by Binis.

Ugbekhae founders came from Igbanke.

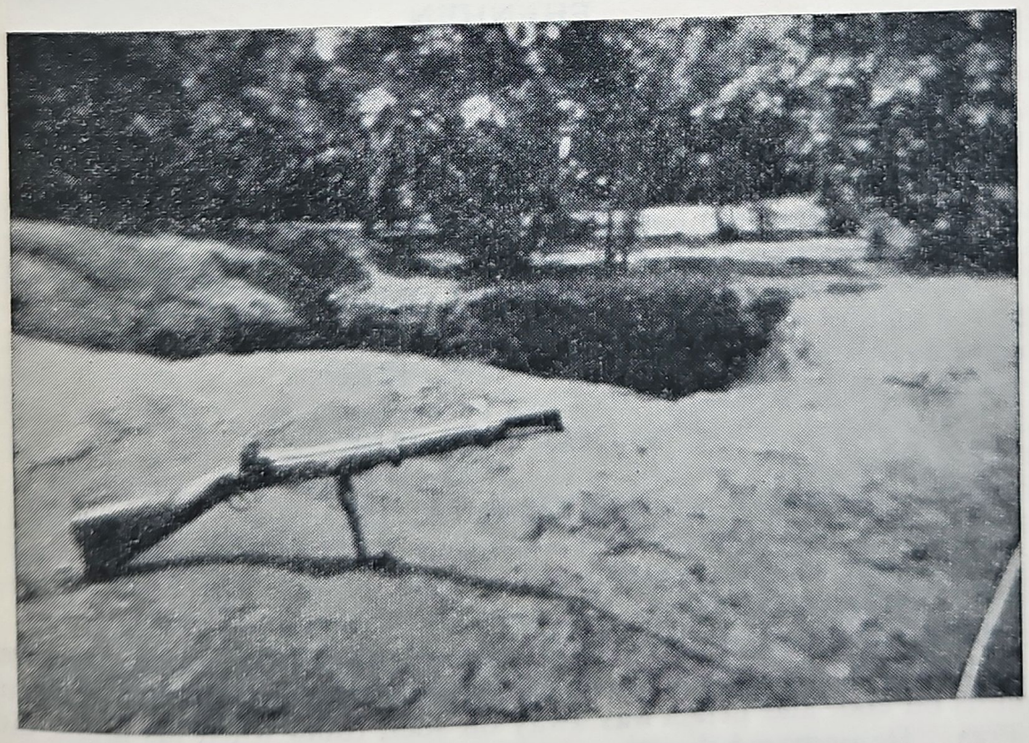
Idunbelegha as narrated above the indigenous natives of Amahor are the OLOKUMI people. Later immigrants founded Idumogbe. In accordance with Ishan custom the original land owners are taken as the seniors and have the prerogative of worshipping OTỌ (Earth). The Oniha is found in this village.

THE WATERSIDE:

In a land so poor in water, Amahor Waterside was bound to attract settlers with the rapid development of villages, for here is the confluence of the OSIOMO and the EBAI. Many of the settlers were non-Ishan traders from Benin, Ijaw, Tsekiri and Urhobo countries.



The remains of one of the Cannons the Binis left behind in 1853.



OISI ARUARAN, so called because of their extra large sizes. These large dane guns were pivoted before being fired.

Ago Edo was founded by the followers of ASIRUUA of Benin.
Ago Ora was founded by Ora traders in the employ of IDUNDUN with his headquarters at UROHI.
Ago Izeko is a recent settlement started by Izeko of Ebelle.
Ago Ogwa was the original farm settlement of men from Ogwa.

II. Kingmakers:

Consist of IDUNBHIJIE—all male descendants of the Royal family of Amahor. They are headed by the Osukhure who, in their case, is the eldest of the Egbele.

III. Installation:

As soon as the Onojie dies an AKHEOA (Caretaker) is appointed to take charge of the Palace. Usually the appointee is invariably the Osukhure. The heir at once begins to prepare for the burial ceremonies and though the vital ones are over in 5—7 days strict Ishan custom demanded three months honour for the late monarch. After three months the Oniha and the Osukhure perform the installation by counting the heir on the Ojikhuo.

IV. Genealogical Tree:

UTE Immigrants led by

ẸWẸRỌẸ, 1508.
|
ASIKA
|
OKPO
|
EHẸNHẸN
|
TOETE
|
OJEZUA
|
IJIEKHUẸMẸN The Magician, 1795.
|
ỌBANỌ, 1840.
|
IZẸBHIJIE, 1870.
|
OGBẸIDE, 1910.
|
AKHADIA, 1937.

V. Comments:

(a) IJIEKHUEMEN, 1795—1840: was renowned for his avid interest in herbs and magic. As a Prince this interest took him away from home months on end, and in fact was away on such tours when his father died in 1795. He prepared the Osun which still bears his name today; one of the trees planted round this Osun is the great Iroko tree right in front of the Onojie's Palace at Amahor. It was reputed to be able to detect the onset of troubles in the town. Ijiekhuemen was one of the Enijie who answered Oba Osemwede's call for help during the Akure War of 1818.

(b) OBANO—1840—1870 AND THE AMAHOR WAR, 1853: He was about ten years Onojie when the Amahor War broke out. OGBEWEKON, living at Igueben, relied heavily upon the medicine men of Amahor who were making a brisk business from administering ANTI-CUTLASS, ANTI-GUN and ANTI-FEAR injections into the skin of the Prince and his supporters. To please him, nobody was anybody in Amahor if he could not haul insults at Oba Adolo, particularly if there were Benin traders passing by! To please Adolo, these traders paid him the dubious compliments of transmitting these insults to him. Obano, an Onojie installed by Osemwede, headed these rebels against Osemwede's heir. So in 1853, Adolo decided to teach Obano and his henchmen a lesson. In those days as now, the COLD WAR or War of Nerves had as much shattering effects on morale as the actual shooting war. The Binis made sure that the traders going to Ishan were told as many stories as would be sufficient to make the Amahor warriors drop their bows, arrows and dane guns and take to their heels, at the sight of an Adolo emissary! Thus for months stories of such Bini medicine men as OKHUAKHUA, whose fluffy scales that drop from his skin when he scratched his body were responsible for the desiccating winds of the Harmattan and could send a warrior within a radius of 2 miles sneezing for days, AYANZU, who could de-arm a whole horde of tribesmen by all their arrows falling useless on his notoriously tough hide, etc. were on the lips of any gossiper at Amahor!

After many months of sleeplessness came the news at last of the Binis approaching Amahor via Uhi and Urohi. Amahor sent all Ogbewekon's supporters, Igueben, Ogwa, and Ebelle, although neither Ogbewekon's side nor the other Ishan Enijie who stood solidly behind their overlord Adolo, could tell exactly on what side the crafty Ogbeide of Ebelle stood.

Amahor prepared to meet the pincer-movement of the Binis and had the advantage of surprise. The people of Ogo infested the jungle miles away from Eguare Amahor, where Obano was. Their one assignment was to get nose-irritating and fearsome Okhuakhua's head. If that was achieved then the Amahor warriors could be sure of taking careful aims instead of making repeated duckings followed by a revealing explosion of sneezing! Truly the Binis were soon seen pressing forward with Okhuakhua holding his EKHUAE and other awe-inspiring paraphernalia. With the war cry of IWẸN OKHUO KHADE ỌIKHI KPA! (Once a woman's breasts have fallen, they can rise no more!) the Amahor warriors ambushed the Binis who had been told that their enemies were still a mile away! Many of those in front and these were the bravest, were mowed down, including the great man of fluffs! That gave the Amahor defenders big courage and so were able to face the Binis on more or less equal terms, despite the terrifying OISI ARUARAN (Outsized Dane Guns, Cannons) which the Binis used to plough the columns of the Amahor fighters. The result of the war was such that both Amahor and the Edos claimed victory—but the Binis left leaving one of their cannons which is still to be seen at the Ewohimi Palace today.

Real peace did not come between Amahor and the Oba until the death of Prince Ogbewekon round about 1880. Izebhijie was then the Onojie as Obano had died some ten years previously. Even after the Prince's death, his heir OSAGIE, had continued the father's fight for the Benin Throne, until he decided wisely at last to stop kicking against thorns. His kind uncle, Oba Adolo forgave him and he was able to return to Benin in peace.

Non-Aggression Pacts:

Amahor was forbidden the sight of blood of the people of Ekpon, Ogwa and Igueben. Though Ekpon and Amahor describe themselves as BROTHERS there is no consanguinity. Their sense of oneness followed the immigration of Igbanke people close to Ekpon, to found Ugbekhae. That of Igueben and Ogwa was a result of the Okoven system.

CHAPTER XXXI

OGWA (Pop. 3,095)

1. History:

There are few spots in the whole of Ishan more controversial, more suspicious and more clanish than the different districts comprising the Southwest Federation. It is my considered opinion that in another ten years when many of the present elders will have died out, it will be near impossible to write their history fairly correctly. Even today, swayed by the politically conscious younger blood, the elders narrate their history with an eye constantly on possible FUTURE REORGANIZATION. While Okalo claims that when the Orhu immigrants arrived they begged for land to settle upon from them, Ogwa claims that the founder of Okalo was a Prince of Ogwa. Amahor contends that Ogwa has not had more than five Enijie since it migrated to its present site, which was their own Ogo (farm land)! And so it goes on.

Pleas that the facts I wanted were only of historical interest have fallen on deaf ears. A reminder that a humble beginning 200—300 years ago could not diminish the stature, grandeur or political importance of any unit today have made not the slightest impression, but instead my efforts earned stories out to prove that while the origin of the speaker was of the Ruling Class, the neighbouring districts were founded by vassals cringing on their knees for land on which to settle, from the ancestors of the story tellers!

This has taxed my energies and time, with the result that anything near the truth from the area itself is not possible, except from places like Benin and surrounding districts like Ewohimi, Ekpoma, Igueben etc., that is, from the origin of the founding fathers and nearby districts with whom they have always had connections.

The history of Ogwa is closely tied up with that of the second dynasty of the Ekpoma Ruling House. In 1485 when the great Uda returned to resuscitate the defunct Ekpoma Ruling Family, one of his many followers was an Okakulo named OMI, a native of IDUMU-EWASE in Benin City. He settled down in Ekpoma and for his good services to Uda, he was given one of the princesses in marriage. As he became more prosperous Omi later went to set up a cottage of his own near the present Egoro-naoka. This was the beginning of OGWA. As the Omi settlement grew, one of his wives gave him an heir who was named UDASẸ, while from the princess of Ekpoma he got a second son called ẸKPỌMABỌ.

Apropos to the origin of the father—a man who hailed from the Oba's Ewase, Omi's heir developed a great interest in magic and herbs. This practice as a herbalist brought him fame and took him out into distant lands, sometimes for a very long period. While away on one such journey, Udase's father died and he, the heir, was nowhere to be found. Hurried messages were sent around, but all attempts to trace him failed. Ekpomabo, the second son was instructed by the Egbele to perform the burial ceremony. Months after, Udase pottered up laden with cowries, cocks and goats. A few hurried questions soon explained why Ekpomabo was found where his respected father used to be. "Very well," said the native doctor assuming that well known air which invariably is necessary when the herbalist wants to impress upon the patient that he, the doctor, has the power of nocturnal flights and the devil himself, "Here I am rich in money and goats: we will begin the burial ceremonies at once." Came the shocking answer from the junior, "That was completed three months ago!"

"Well done!" continued Udase, "Tell me the cost and I am rich enough to pay you doubly."

It was the Egbele that answered that: "As embarrassing as this case is, we are very sorry that the great Omi's position made it impossible for us to postpone his burial indefinitely. Your able brother has performed the vital ceremonies and we are afraid, that's that!" Udase was not going to give in like that; he went and told his mother's people and a civil war broke out, with Ekpomabo and his supporters having the worst of it. An S.O.S. was dispatched to Ekpoma, Ekpomabo's mother's home. Early one morning when children of Omi's settlement were scampering along after flying termites which in Ishan make delicious delicacies when fried, Ekpoma warriors swooped on the village massacring many of the innocent children and carrying off many as war booties. This incensed all Ogwa, no matter what side they had originally belonged, and like one man, they came out with one purpose, revenge on a grand scale. The issue was no longer UDASE-EKPOMABO affair but Ogwa-Ekpoma tussle. A few days passed and one morning when Ekpoma Egbonughe were sweeping the Eguare street, Omi's people let hell lose on the young men. Heads dropped everywhere and a few lucky ones were kidnapped.

These retaliatory skirmishes went on for a time until Ogwa emissaries went to Ekpoma to tell them how horrified Ogwa elders were over the bloodshed then on between such kindreds. They talked Ekpoma into a truce and invited them to a parley which was to be held near IYANLOTỌMI. But before the arrival of the Ekpoma people Ogwa dug a large pit and cleverly covered it up. When all Ekpoma warriors had arrived and squatted on the Ogwa side of the trap, Ogwa fell on the defenceless and astonished Ekpoma. They just had to run but in so doing they dropped headlong into the pit. There was mass burial of Ogwa enemies with much UGOMI (Rejoicing!)

As an after-thought Ogwa elders realised that Uda's Ekpoma was a large district whose warriors would fight Ogwa until every Ogwa man was dead. They ruled that discretion being the better part of valour, Ogwa must make a dignified retreat, seeking sanctuary in the effacing bosom of the jungle. Ogwa then shifted to a spot near Ugbegun N'Ebudin. Here they were until the great scourge of Small Pox that nearly wiped out the entire settlement during the time of Ohonsi. He collected most of the survivors and for the second time, Ogwa shifted, this time, to near Ebelle — their present site. Those they left behind, the hardy ones who would not move — became IZOGEN or OGWA N'UWA.

Where Ukpogo is now was the original farmland of Okalo and Ebelle. Thus Ogwa did not come to its present site until about 1815, a year before Osemwede became Oba of Benin. When Ogwa arrived the present Southwest Federation area, Ijiekhuemen the Magician was the Onojie of Amahor, Ogun, Onojie of Ebelle and Ideamolua, Onojie of Okalo.

Ohonsi's final settlement became Eguare (present pop. 798). The IYEKOGBE part of Eguare was an extension of the original Omi's family while IDIBHIJE portion was founded by one of Omi's male descendants. Idumẹbọ quarter was founded by immigrants from Ekpoma.

UKPOGO (1,324): was founded by OGBOLE, ISIBOR and IKHIMI, descendants of Omi.

IZOGEN (774): Marks today as already explained OGWA N'UWA, Ogwa-at-home. IDUMUỌMỌ was founded by immigrants from Irrua.

EHA (199): was founded by descendants of Omi's followers and are thus not related by blood to members of the Ruling Family.

The village deity, particularly of Ukpogo, is OGHU, a lake or Odighili, (ẸDẸ HIA LẸRIO OKUN ODIGHILI WẸ LẸN ILAE! meaning All Rivers flow to the sea, but Odighili refused to have an outlet!) It has been worshipped ever since it was discovered by a hunter, OGBOLE. One of its famous priest (Ohen) was ERANOGWA.

II. Genealogical Tree:

ONE OF UDA'S FOLLOWERS FROM IDUMU-EWASE CALLED
OMI
|
UDASẸ
|
ẸKHIMẸRE, 1705
|
IRẸNLẸN
|
OGWAZENAYE
|
EDIALE N'ỌBO
|
OSẸLUA
|
OSUNDE
|
ỌHỌNSI, 1815.
|
ẸIGWỌBALO, 1845.
|
UZAMA
|
IJEREMẸN
|
OBỌIGBA (IJIOGBẸ)
|
IMARALU.

III. Comments:

Strictly speaking until 1815, Ogwa had Ekakulo as head of the settlement. The first real Onojie of which the present Onojie, IMARALU, is a direct descendant, was OHONSI, who became Onojie a year before EREDIA-UWA was recalled to Benin to become Oba Osemwede. Osemwede who had known all Ishan leaders, was too willing to reward the services rendered by all, with Ogwa being no exception. In 1816 Ohonsi went to Benin and was installed Onojie, getting his Ada and Ebelen from the Oba.

Before Ohonsi there were great and respected leaders, all descendants of Omi, but they were no Enijie. At that time Ogwa was more correctly an appendage of Ekpoma, and so directed all its services to the Onojie of Ekpoma. The break came during the Udase-Ekpomabo fight which spread into an inter-clan war. It was the rash action of Ekpoma that robbed Ekpomabo of his chance, and with all Ogwa swinging unto Udase's side, Ekpomabo lost the fight for leadership which should have been his by virtue of his burial credits.

This fact of the recent conferment of Onojie title upon Ogwa leaders does not subtract one inch from the dignity of the present holders of the title as long as they were truly and properly created so by the Oba.

EKHIMERE was as great a man as any ruler of his people. After the break with Ekpoma, of course, Ogwa found itself free and could live as it pleased under its own leader — but to be an Onojie, that leader had to have the title conferred on him by the Oba. EKHIMERE'S story illustrates my point. This great and wealthy leader assumed the leadership of Ogwa about 1705, a few years before Akenzua I ascended the Benin Throne. He became so rich that he was able to obtain a house ỌKANIVIE (A coral bead carver).

One day one of the Benin traders trying to win the love of one of his daughters promised her one big coral bead, and disdainfully she retorted, "I am above the girl you can win with an offer of Ivie. My own father has Okanivie — so try another line!" So saying she waved the man to the door. Humiliated the Bini went to the Oba, with a ready story of vengeance. He told Akenzua I that there was a man in Ogwa in Ishan who kept an Okanivie in his house. Akenzua dispatched an emissary at once to Ishan asking Ekhimere to remember that ỌVIỆN MỌ ADA, KHARẸ KHA BIỆN ỌKANIVIE! (A commoner has no state sword let alone a coral bead carver!), and therefore he should dispatch the craftman with all the beads he had already manufactured. Ekhimere said he had received the message and advised the messenger to go. After some time the Oba sent again, still with no result. So the Oba sent warriors to bring not the bead carver but Ekhimere's head. Ekhimere is remembered today as the great man who disappeared whereas what he did was to commit suicide by digging a deep ditch into which he, the Okanivie and all the beads fell rather than the Oba reaping where he did not sow! Sounds silly but the act has carved his name on the record book of Ogwa after nearly 250 years.

However the point that mattered to us in the story is the crime which this great leader was said to have committed — he, a non-royalty was keeping a bead carver in his house!

CHAPTER XXXII

A. UGUN (Pop. 1,036)

1. History:

Ugun is the youngest amongst the clans forming the present South-west Federation. Its first settlement, the present Eguare (pop. 423), was not in existence until about the middle of the 19th century, a few years before the mass arrival of refugees from EZEN came to convert the humble settlement into a district of its own.

ERAIN, one of the ambitious sons of OHONSI, the respected Onojie of Ogwa, founded the original settlement of Ugun, shortly after the death of his father.

2. UKEKHOLO was the very first village that grew up round Erain's settlement. Many of the founders were the Ezen refugees rendered homeless by the ravages of the Amahor War of 1853. Some immigrants arrived from Uromi. Others from IBI near Agbor founded AGỌ ẸDO while later arrivals, mostly from Ekpoma, founded AGỌ ỌLA.

2. Genealogical Tree:

ERAIN ỌHỌNSI about 1845.
1
OGUN
1
OZIM
1
IRA
1
OZẸN
1
ATIVIE
1
AKHUEMIJE
1
OGUẸ
1
UZEGBA
1
USIFO
1
ẸGBẸLE
1
ẸDO
I
IJEBỌMẸN
I
EBULẸN
I
ẸHIJIATỌ (Present Onojie).

B. UJIOGBA (Pop. 2,269)

I. History:

But for IDUMỌBO (pop. 349), Ujiogba should have been the youngest member of the Southwest Federation of Ebelle, Ogwa, Ewossa, Ugun and Ujiogba. When IKEAKHE the Unlucky was the Onojie of Ekpoma, his own junior maternal brother called IZẸGBO seduced one of his many wives, since as the Onojie's close brother he had ready access to the harem. According to Ishan custom the penalty for this was death, but since the Onojie was law and in this case he could not exert the maximum penalty, he decreed that Izegbo be banished from Ekpoma. The young man with a few of his possessions left with their most junior brother as his only companion; At Ukpoke, even this precious companion was denied him on the pretext that Ekpoma could not afford to lose two such brothers at once. This younger brother stayed behind to found a quarter at IGUISI.

Poor Izegbo carried on and had to live on his wits: he interested himself in magic and herbs, and as he wandered on he soon became proficient in the art of healing. He trekked on gathering up the lingo of oracle-men and the awe-inspiring offishness of herbalists, until by the time he got to Benin City, he was the perfect picture of the great Native Doctor!

Within a few months the new great witch doctor from Esan was as busy as a bee, and soon he amassed wealth, a look at which made him nostalgic: he very much wanted to return to Ishan to show his brother what he had made of himself. At last he left the City with 31 slaves all loaded with his property. During the long trek back they rested at a spot which fascinated him, so much so that he decided to stay and be a master as his unforgiving brother was way back home. Where he made his first cottage became IDUMOBO, the very first settlement in Ujiogba. Though later more numerous and more assertive settlers came to rest authority from Izegbo's co-founders many of whom were slaves, the village of Idumobo as its name implies, till this day, is famous in the art of healing.

When Izegbo died, his heir ILẸH or OWUZAH, carried on his father's profession, many cured and grateful patients remaining to swell the population of the cottage. The renowned IZẸBHIJIE, who was famous in Ishan and Benin during the reign of Oba Ovonramwen, was the 7th son of Ileh. This family can be traced down to the ORDIAS of Ekpoma today and it is interesting that one of Izegbo's descendants is still in the medical line — running the Mental Hospital, Yaba!

2. EGUARE (670):

This was founded shortly after the death of Oba Osemwede, one of whose sons, called ORUA, being the founder.

3. IDUMOGO (178):

The founders came from different places: A majority came from UHI in Benin Division. Others came from Ekpoma and Urohi. IDUMESI quarter came from UJAGBEN.

4. UKPATO (331):

Here is the traditional home of the Iyasele and the Ezomo of Ujiogba. A majority of the founding fathers came from OGWAHI (Ogwashi-Uku).

5. IDUMUOWELE (172):
The founders came from OWELE in Urhobo area.
6. UKPOKE is really an extension from Eguare and got its name because of its position on a hill.

The name UJIOGBA which came to cover the new settlement including Izegbo's, followed the end of the war between Orua's domain and the Binis. This war, which was more of slave raids by the Binis, scattered the people under Orua to Ogwashi, Ujagben, Okhuesan etc., but when peace returned many of those who had left began finding their way back home, the meeting point being where the present Eguare is now. When some began to demand that they should return to the ancestral Ijie, others answered, JIỌ GBA FO (Let all assemble first). By the time they had assembled in a large number to be able to resist the Binis should they return, many had put up fairly solid houses and found it impossible to move to their original ancestral home, which today is marked by ALU ORUA.

II. Present Onojie:

The present ruler of Ujiogba is WILLIAM EGBEGBAMẸN IGHODALO II. He had his education at the Catholic Schools, Ubiaja and Uromi. Leaving school in 1944, he became a teacher at Ujiogba Catholic School in 1945. He relinquished this appointment when his father Ighodalo I died on the 21st of December 1948. After the full burial ceremonies he became the Onojie of Ujiogba on the 28th of January, 1949.

III. Kingmakers:

The elders of Eguare form the Ujiogba kingmakers.

IV. Installation:

After the burial ceremonies the actual installation according to Ishan custom is performed by the Oniha and the Ikotọ or Osukhure.

V. Genealogical Tree:

ORUA OSEMEDE
1
OGBẸBỌ
1
ADỌMAEGBE
1
ỌRIBHABỌ
1

1	1
ẸKẸMẸOJIE	ADEGBE
	1
	ALUỌBHOSẸ
	1
	IRIBHOGBẸ, 1897
	1
	IGHODALO I, 1920 — 1948
	1
	W.E. IGHODALO II, 28/1/49.

VI. Comments:

OGBEBO had just become the Onojie when the Amahor War broke out in its final fury.

Right from Orua's time succession has been quite smooth until the death of ORIBHABO. He had two sons of which EKEMEOJIE was the first and heir while ADEGBE was the second. The heir's mother was quite poor and came from a low family; on the contrary Adegbe was surrounded with wealthy men of affluence and had a most vocal mother's family. As soon as Ekemeojie wanted to begin the burial ceremonies of his father which was his right to perform, he was challenged by Adegbe who felt that his senior brother would make anything but a respectable Onojie. A bitter strife followed and from this the influential young man Adegbe emerged victorious. Thus the line shifted from the senior to the junior with the kingmakers looking on helplessly. They were so helpless that they accepted the vital burial ceremonies from the victor and Adegbe was duly installed Onojie.

CHAPTER XXXIII

UGBEGUN (Pop. 6,394)

I. History:

The majority of the people of present day Ugbegun, after a rather nomadic life, were originally living in Irrua, close by Usugbenu. Two things made them shift to a place where they could live like free men; the first was the autocratic ruler of Irrua, each successor being just a little more so than his predecessor. The second which was the last straw, was the incessant friction with the people of Irrua which culminated in the Irrua-Ugbegun War. In this the fewer Ugbegun people were so massacred that the lucky ones who escaped decided to put a safe distance between them and these war-mongers of Irrua.

(a) EGUARE (1,108):

The original founders came from Benin under the leadership of a warrior called ODOHUN; they did not come direct from Benin. Their first stop was at Iruekpen in Ekpoma area. After some time here they moved on to live for a time at IDUMU-UKHUA in Uhiele. By the time the immigrants left Ekpoma area Odohun's son, ỌWELE had become the leader. Till this day one cannot fail to be impressed at the way Ugbegun people have stuck to the Ekpoma dialect.

The migratory body moved from Idumu-Ukhua to a place in Irrua living quite close to Usugbenu. Here they were until the Irrua-Ugbegun War which nearly ruined them as a unit; some fled to Ibore and today constitute UGBEGUN Quarter of Ibore, others to IDUMU-ESABA of Ubierumu in Uromi and some to IDUMU-OZA also in Uromi.

The overall name of Ugbegun came from their first real Onojie called UGBEGUN, who went along with the rest of Esan leaders round about 1463 to answer Oba Ewuare the Selfish's call.

(b) IKEKOGBE:

The founders were the original people who had settled on Irrua land but had to move to safety like Iki Opoji, Ivue Uromi etc., who bore the tooth-mark of Irrua aggression. When peace finally came an Okoven was established between Ugbegun and Usugbenu.

The Ihaza is found in this quarter.

(c) UMELEN (412):

This village took origin from IDUMUOBO (UGBEGUN NE' EBUDIN) during the reign of AMUZE, and has the same feast and custom. They are closely related to the body of refugees that settled in Ibore. The Iyasele lives in Umelen.

(d) IDUMU-OLI (430):

This quarter originated from Eho via Idumu-Ukhua in Uhiele Ekpoma. The people of this part of Uhiele and Idumu-Oli still maintain this ancient connection.

(e) IDUMUEGUALE founders came from UHI on the Ishan-Benin Road.

(f) UGBEGUN N'EBUDIN (2,452):

This place was founded in the main by ỌBO hence its other name which is IDUMU-ỌBO. Obo's party suffered the brunt of the Irrua-

Ugbegun War and finally fled furtherest than the rest of Ugbegun, straight into the heart of the jungle — thick with oil palm trees. They were later joined by immigrants from ERA and EBHORAN in Kukuruku division.

The Oniha of Ugbegun is found here.

II. Present Onojie:

Presiding over the destiny of Ugbegun today is OBADE N'OJIE, who was OBADE Asikagbon as a Prince. He attended school in several places — Ebudin, Ugbegun, Government School Ewu, Catholic School Igueben, finally passing out at Government School Uromi in 1938. He had his secondary education at ENNITONIAN BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL, Port Harcourt. Like most Ishan boys, he had to stop before completion of his secondary education because of lack of financial support. In 1941, he joined the Army and served under the Base Ordnance as a technical clerk here in Nigeria and in the Sierra Leone. He was demobbed in 1946. On August 15th 1947 his father ASIKAGBON died and in that same year after the burial ceremonies he was installed Onojie.

Obade N'Ojie is one of the best educated Enijie in Ishan. He is young, fluent, forthright and bold up to a fault. He does not know how to mince words, which is rather unfortunate for a ruler whose armour should be diplomacy. This has made enemies of many of his would-otherwise-have-been friends, with the creation of many anxious moments for this brilliant son of Ishan.

III. Kingmakers:

The elders of Eguare form the kingmakers of Ugbegun.

IV. Installation:

On the death of an Onojie the first son begins the burial ceremonies at once, after the Oshodin has led the inmates of the harem in the official crying. This is not counterwise to the Oniha's official duty of announcing the Onojie's death. The Oshodin who is the caretaker of the harem, of course, has to lead in all activities officially affecting the harem.

After the 7 days intensive ceremonies, the celebrant having satisfied the spirits of his departed ancestors, he is now ready to inherit his father's official and private property according to Ishan laws and custom. After the Iluobo which also combines the inheritance of his father's wives with the pre-installation blessings, he is installed by the Odionwele of Eguare and the Oniha.

V. Genealogical Tree:

ODOHUN, Leader from Benin
|
ỌWELE
|
UGBẸGUN, First Onojie, 1463.
|
ẸBỌ
|
ORẸKA
|
OSẸWELEMẸN
|
AMUZE
|
ODOBU
|
IGUN
|
OGBẸJẸLE
|
ỌSUNDE
|
ỌRIBHABỌ
|
AKEME
|
ASIKAGBỌN, 1916
|
ỌBADE N'OJIE, 1947.

VI. Comments:

Ugbegun is not today quite a peaceful town because of some fundamental mistakes over native laws and custom. It will be seen in several places that where there has been careless deviations, seeds of chieftaincy disputes are sown and they sprout so easily on a soil richly manured with corruption.

The trouble started with the fearless ASIKAGBON who some call THE TYRANT. One did not need to be a detective to see in Asikagbon's scales of justice quite a lot besides the evidence, and soon this brought him head-on against the British Administration. In 1927 he was imprisoned for two years. Again in 1943, he suffered another punishment in prison. The Onojie's first son, OBADE was away on national service and so the question of appointment of a regent came up. According to Ishan laws and custom the next in line of succession should have been appointed; that is, Asikagbon's next brother, or Asikagbon's heir's senior uncle. Instead it was felt that Ugbegun needed an experienced man who understood the ills of the town to rule while Asikagbon was away. For this there was no nobler person than the industrious Chief IYAYI who knew how to combine industry with politics. In 1946 Asikagbon came back like a bad penny and of course the town was divided between those who wanted him or felt it was his right to return to his natural position and those who felt that in vengeance Asikagbon would burn Ugbegun and hence wanted Iyayi to continue as regent.

Asikagbon did get his throne back in accordance with Ishan laws and custom but till date Ugbegun has not got the peace and harmony it yearns for.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IGUEBEN (Pop. 9,801)

I. History:

Igueben is the youngest of the larger districts of Ishan, and until recently its leader was no Onojie but an honoured head of the district who went by the name of ỌKAIGUN. Igueben is so young that it still retains the mother-tongue, BINI.

THE IDAH WAR, 1515—1516:

About a decade after ESIGIE became Oba of Benin, war broke out between him and the Attah of Idah. At first the audacious Attah marched on Benin where he was tricked and defeated. During his flight home, Oba Esigie, like the son of Ozolua he was, led his army personally and chased the fleeing Idah warriors who he wanted to liquidate. Reaching the Niger the warriors crossed in their canoes, but the Binis who had no canoes, fumed up and down the wrong side of the lordly Niger! Although no physical contact was possible the nearness of the Binis caused the inhabitants of Idah so much insomnia that waves of them fled into the neighbouring country-side. At last peace was made and the Binis made the long trek back in 1516.

One of the trusted and daring warriors Esigie had was a man called ẸBẸN. In their long drive to the Niger across jungles, the Binis made several halts. At one spot they stopped for recuperation and later went after the enemy. On their way back, nearly a year after, the body of warriors led by Eben halted again at this particular spot and was astonished to see ordinary bits of yams they had thrown away some months back had grown into thickly leafed yam creepers and on digging them up, tubers of over-sized yams were obtained. The amazed soldiers went into the neighbouring bush to dig up the yams that abounded the original stopping place of the previous year. The thought came forcibly to their leader that yams which were not planted or tended yielding so much would produce wonderful tubers should they be planted and looked after as in normal farms. Unable to resist the amazing fertility of the soil he sent a message to the Oba that he was remaining at this spot rather than return home, and to convince the Oba of the fertility of the chosen spot, Eben sent Esigie the harvest of an unattended farm.

This settlement founded by Bini warriors under the leadership of the great Eben became known after his name — IGUEEBEN. It is not true to say that the name came from two words, OGUN and EBEN, meaning "the blacksmith who manufactures the Oba's Eben or State Swords." Though Eben himself was a native of IDUMU-IGUN Ugboha quarter of Benin City, he was himself no blacksmith, but a famed warrior. It is equally untrue to say that the Eben and Ada the Obas of Benin used in those days were manufactured at Igueben. On the contrary, each Ishan Onojie after installation by the Oba in Benin after his formal installation at home in Ishan, had as his evidence of recognition by the Oba, Eben which had to be given him at Benin City. Brass casting was introduced to Benin from ILE IFE round about the 13th century, so that by about the time Igueben was founded, the Binis had already become proficient and specialists in brass work of which EBELEN is one. It would be ridiculous then to suggest that the Oba's Eben and Ada had to be ordered from Ishan. Even if the only makers were found in Ishan, what normally could have happened was that the Oba could

have sent for and acquired all those in the trade even if it meant wholesale deportation of the village of Igueben!

IGUEBEN correctly came from two words, IGUE which is a Bini word for CAMP or Village, and EBEN which was the name of the builder of the camp.

During the return of Eben and his party, it is said that the great ENOWE accompanied him from Ugboha (of Ishan). When Eben refused to continue his journey to Benin, Enowe had to remain with him and he served Eben so well that on his death, as he had no heir, Eben decreed that all members of the new settlement would become faithful Enowe's heirs. He was accordingly given a royal burial and from then on all Idumigun which was the original settlement founded by Eben, began to worship Enowe. This many elders at Igueben told me was the association between Ugboha and Igueben, particularly Eben's Idumigun.

I have narrated this history as it affected Enowe to emphasise the connection between Igueben and Ugboha. There is only one Enowe, the great Enowe, a renowned war leader, the expert blacksmith and the respected physician of Benin. In gratitude for the victories he brought Benin he was honoured with deification and has a shrine at Idumu-Igun Ugboha in Benin City. It is unthinkable that such an honoured personality of Benin History would have deserted Benin when the empire cracked up under Ewuare. The party that led the immigrants who founded the Ugboha Ruling Family, here in Ishan, was headed by Ijiebomen and Enowe's father. Eben himself and most of the warriors who agreed to stay behind with him in the fertile camp were all natives of Idumu-Igun Ugboha — the final home of the great Enowe, Ijiebomen and his junior brother, ONOR of Ugboha. Here then is the association between Igueben and Ugboha: at the ancestral home of their founders, IDUMU-IGUN UGBOHA in Benin City. Thus the deified hero Enowe was honoured in three places, at Benin, Ugboha and Idumigun Igueben. True, Eben had tried to make the great warrior remain with him at his camp or Idumigun, but Enowe had already made Benin City his home and could not stay. Whatever services Enowe must have rendered to Eben must have been during the year-long Idah War, for he died shortly after the Victory Celebrations of 1516.

The original IGUE of EBEN, by immigration soon grew into a large village with spreading quarters and today there are six big quarters in all.

(a) EGUARE (1,409):

This was the original Igue founded by Eben and up to this day, is known by the name of the ancestral home of its founder, IDUMIGUN from IDUMU-IGUN. OLAIGELE shifted to the present site of ODUGHA in Igueben and hence the Onojie quarter is sometimes referred to as IDUMU-OLAIGELE. Right up to the early thirties, Idumigun was the name by which the administrative centre of Igueben was known and its head was the OKAIGUN, but in modern times with the tendency not to be outdone by those who head their people and go by the name of Onojie, the Okaigun, though much preferred by the late IMADOJIEMU, began its regretfully sure journey to oblivion with Idumigun itself fading away into the shadow of the better known word, EGUARE. Understandably the strict adherence to the title Okaigun could have become embarrassing for the head of Igueben in recent times, since the recognized constitutional head of any distinct group in Ishan is ONOJIE.

IDUMUỌMỌ quarter was founded by one of the sons of OZUALOKUN, but a large body of Ora traders joined the new quarter round about 1910 during the reign of Okaigun ILOGHIOBA. Another son of Ozualokun founded IDUMUOTUTU (331). The Idumu-edo portion was founded by a native doctor from Benin City.

(b) IDUMEKA (1,196):
Consists of several quarters: IDUMUOKPE was founded by a Bini called OKPE while IWEKEN was founded by another Bini from UDO.

(c) UHE (618):
The larger part of this village was founded by men from the original Eben settlement who were joined later by fresh comers from Benin. Some immigrants who came from Agbor founded IDUMAGBOR.

(d) IDUMOKA has several quarters all founded by men from different places. The first settlement was a camp built by an Awka man. IDUMU-IGBIKI was founded by an Ora man called IGBIKI. IDUMU-ODUGBO (304) was founded by immigrants from Idumebo in Ubiaja.

(e) AFUDA (986):
This is one of the earliest settlements that grew round Eben's original Idumigun. Like most Igueben villages many of the founding fathers hailed from Benin direct. OGBENI was one such Benin man, an elephant hunter who founded IDUMUGBENI. Many of the early settlers who founded IGBEKA were natives of Eka in Agbor area.

(f) IDUMUOGO was the over-all name of the outlying hamlets that grew round Eben's settlement. Many of the newcomers were Binis. One Akure trader called OLUBUNMI founded the quarter called IDUMU-OLUKUMI (395).

EKO-UBADIN (454):
This village was developed by the hard working and wealthy farmer UBADIN, a native of Idumu-Esogban in Ebhoyi Uromi. Although Ubadin deservedly gave his name to the place, before his arrival there was a small settlement inhabited by an Igueben man called ISIBỌ and his family. Ubadin who arrived about 1912 overshadowed him by sheer force of a prolific family, his industry and interest in farming which directed all hungry eyes to the village from all the neighbouring areas of Ishan during the famine season. All seeking yams to buy were directed to Ubadin and it was quite logical for him to dominate the village in name and importance.

II. Present Onojie:
Is IMADOJIEMU II who up to his father's death on the 17th of October, 1953, was Prince David ẸILUOJERIỌ. He is a grandson of Eromosele the Great of Irrua and is a cousin of Isidaehomen II. After his education he entered the Nurses Training School at Ibadan and qualified as a Government Nurse but on the eve of his taking up appointment under the Government at the General Hospital, Lagos, he received the sad news of his great father's death. He returned home for the necessary respects to his late father but pressure had to be brought to bear on the young Prince who preferred the godly work of a Nurse to

the life of pomp and noisy politics. His experienced relative, Chief S. O. Esangbedo, the Oloton of Igueben, impressed upon the young Prince that it was a responsibility he could not shirk whether he liked it or not. Finally he succumbed to such arguments and had to forego the job for which he had such a burning interest. On the 27th of October, 1953, he was installed Onojie at the innocent age of 18.

III. Kingmakers:

Are the elders of Idumigun Eguare who now form the senior members of the Ruling Family of Igueben.

IV. Installation:

The Igueben method is that of THE THRONE NEVER BEING VACANT. Although most Ishan Ruling Houses are trying to adopt this method in an attempt to obviate strife, the truth must be said that it is not an Ishan custom. Before the Europeans came it was unheard of that a king died and without the customary honour of a burial, his heir went scrambling for property and title. According to Ishan Native Laws and Custom no one, be he a commoner, not to speak of a successor to the title of Onojie, dreamt of inheritance until he had performed the burial ceremonies of his father. Indeed it would be bastardly for any son to create the impression of being more interested in inheritance than first rendering the services custom places upon the shoulders of every true son — BURIAL CEREMONY.

However in modern Igueben, like most Ishan districts where there is NO LIKELIHOOD OF A SUCCESSION DISPUTE, as soon as the Onojie dies, his body is interred ceremoniously, animals now replacing the human beings since the abolition of the slave trade. The undisputed heir is dressed in Ivie and cap, flanked by Ada and Ebenlen attendants. The Osukhure then presents him to the spirits of the departed ancestors at the ancestral shrine. He is then taken to the main inner Ojukhuo (throne) and the Odionwele of Idumigun counts him on the Ojukhuo making him take his seat on the 11th count. He then gives the salutation of ỌMỌ KHẸ BHỌ (May you, my lord, live forever!).

The people now come forward to acknowledge him as the new Onojie in order of precedence. After the elders of the kingmakers, then come the seven traditional chiefs before the other hereditary title holders. Knowing that he as yet has no legal claim to the family property and the title, the new Onojie must start the burial ceremonies at once. These ceremonies last 7 days after which the shrine of the late Onojie can then be shifted from the outside to join the long line of ancestors at the ancestral shrine, within the palace. Then and then only has he secured for himself and his children full right to inheritance. The ceremonies that follow for the next three months are merely for rejoicing as the new Onojie and to recoup himself by way of presents from new favour and friendship seekers.

V. Genealogical Tree:

WARRIORS from Idah War under the leadership of
ẸBẸN, 1516.

ỌZUALOKUN

AWO

UJELU

EZẸLE

ABHIẸKHẸ

UZỌBOA

ERE

UZAZA

ENELUYI

OHANLẸN

UDUẸHI

ARIẸNRIẸN

ATU

IRIAMAN

ELABOYA

OBỌI

IRERE

ỌKỌ

IDIGBA

ỌLAIGELE

ỌHỌNWẸ

AGAMA

ILOGHIỌBA The EFEGANBHUDU

ỌMỌZEJELE, d. 1917

IMADOJIEMU I, 1921.

IMADOJIEMU II, 27/10/53.

IHỌNWA, Regent.

VI. Comments:

As stated already the camp Eben founded was known generally as Idumigun and his successors as OKAIGUN. Even up to Imadojiemu who died in 1953, the rulers had stuck to this title which meant "the owner of Idumigun," the administrative headquarters of Igueben.

ILOGHIOBA THE EFEGANBHUDU was famous for his sympathy and bravery as the Okaigun. It was during his reign that Igueben became a distinct district. His sympathy for one of Oba Osemwede's sons nearly made him revert the meaning of his name "Am no Oba's enemy!"

THE AMAHOR WAR:

ẸGHORI was an Igueben damsel who got married to Oba Osemwede while a Prince in exile at Ewohimi. She soon became pregnant and gave birth to a plump son but through superstitious fear she hid the happy tidings from the Oba. Later in the day another woman gave birth to a son from the Oba's harem and this was promptly reported to the Oba with jubilation. This second son which according to the report that got to the palace, was the Oba's son and heir, was named ODIN-OVBA. A few days after, stupid Eghori got a message through to the Oba that her son arrived a few days previously. But according to Benin custom the Oba had heard of the birth of Odin-Ovba first and so he was rightly given the First Position. Eghori protested that it was the people of Ogbe that had advised her not to publicize the birth of this son who it was believed had been running a shuttle-cock race between this world and the next, in a quick succession, for fear of the baby dying again. "You were stupid and your advisers in Ogbe were foolish," said Oba Osemwede, and commemorated this foolish action by giving the unlucky boy the name of OGBEWẸKỌN. When the two boys grew up there was no love lost between them and by the time their father died the enmity between them was such that they were no longer on "seeing terms!"

When Odin-Ovba was crowned Oba it was only logical that his enemies should be headed by Ogbewekon who felt that Odin-Ovba was a usurper. He returned to his mother's home in Igueben, and asked the Okaigun, Iloghioba, to help him regain what he missed through his mother's foolishness.

From Igueben warriors were gathered and Ogbewekon made several attempts to beat his brother, who became Oba ADOLO, five years previously. Several bloody battles were fought, the warriors meeting halfway with the inhabitants of EZEN and Amahor bearing the brunt of the war depredation. It was these incessant ravages of war that made the people of Ezen migrate to Agbor district while others found sanctuary round present day Ugun; and so Ezen as an Ishan district became extinct.

The final decisive battles were fought at Amahor and Ogbewekon's forces were so huniliated that he returned to Igueben, leaving Oba Adolo in peace at Benin City.

IMADOJIEMU I, 1921—1953:

He was the one man who had done so much under such a difficult period to place the name of Igueben on the political map of Ishan. He was industrious, gentle, kept his head when all around him lost theirs under trying times, full of wisdom and with his death went a wealth of knowledge of Ishan Native Laws and custom. As if he knew he would soon die when I asked for an hour's interview, he granted four and poured out stories many of which were supported with dates which despite my

efforts to disprove, I found to be as correct as was possible in those difficult days of few records. His sense of humour blended so well with his regal carriage and comportment which he maintained without the Idigba (!), that by the time he fell ill he was one of the most respected and loved Enijie, outside Igueben.

His father OMOZEJIELE died in 1917 when Imadojiemu "I" was a minor. IHONWA became the regent until he came of age in 1921 when he became the Okaigun at the age of 18. He lay low, concentrating on honest means of becoming wealthy in Ishan — farming, on which he prided himself until his dying day. From 1921—1931 he left the administrative and judicial control of Igueben in the hands of OKOJIE of Ugboha, after whose death he came on his own. Though he much preferred the title of Okaigun as a man of tradition, the rapidly changing political condition of the division made it wise for him to use the term understandable to Ishans as symbols of near-absolute authority — ONOJIE, his headquarters, Idumigun becoming EGUARE.

His last few years were made unhappy because of the political agitations that spread as a general warning all over the division to the Enijie that their time was up; but for his wisdom, respect for all and myriads of sincere friends all over Ishan, his political tormentors could have succeeded in their design to withdraw recognition from him as Onojie. During his protracted illness he kept attention from himself and cheered all around his sickbed with witty conversations and humour. He died on Saturday, October 17th, 1953, at the age of about 50.

CHAPTER XXXV

A. EKEKHELEN (Pop. 1,213)

History:

The name is derived from two words, EKO meaning Camp and EKHẸNLẸN meaning Traders. The founders, headed by ỌMỌKHUA, were Binis trading to Ishan. These particular traders dealt with Igueben, Ugbegun, Udo etc. Between 1890 and 1895 during the reign of Oba Ovonramwen many of these traders rested at camps which they built at this spot before fanning out to sell their wares. The land on which these huts were built were originally Igueben's. Round about 1915 when slavery abolition really began to have meaning in Benin and Ishan, many emancipated men and women in confused attempts to make out their homes in Ishan landed in Ekekhenlen and never got beyond there.

Till this day the dialect spoken in this village is Bini.

B. URHOHI (Pop. 2,385)

1. History:

The correct name is UROI.

Urohi, after the McCall Constitution of 1950 was incorporated in the IVIE-UDA-ESABA Federation of Ekpoma, Egoro, Opoji, Ukhun and Idoa.

Urohi was founded about the same time as Igueben, round about 1516 during the return journey of the Binis from the Idah War. As they left the bank of the Niger in groups for home the medicine men prepared lots of medicines and charms placed in wooden flat vessels called URO, which were stationed at strategic spots along the main routes home. These were meant to be deterrents to the Idah people should they ever think of repeating their futile march of the previous year. To guard these supposedly powerful charms soldiers were stationed at these various spots and these were the founders of such places as UROH up north in Uzea area and UROH down south of Ilushi, where the march home started. At the final spot where the Binis left the Ishan territory a bigger charm with many more soldiers was left; this was the origin of UROI.

The warriors that founded Uroi were under the command of OSẸIGHẸLẸN. As the settlement grew friction with neighbouring Ekpoma developed and by the time Oseighelen's heir was in command Ekpoma threw its overwhelming weight against Uroi and the new commander, IRẸNLẸN, fled to Ogieghudu in Benin Division with his family. Later an UKỌ-Ọba (Oba's emissary) called ẸRIBỌ was stationed at Uroi to forward the tributes of Urohi people and those of traders who came to join the descendants of the Bini warriors. Ẹribọ later returned to Benin leaving UROKUYUWA as his deputy. This man was the father of OMIJIE, who founded IDUMU-OTIEN. Later he shifted further into the jungle and his cottage grew into Eko-Omijie.

Urohi was on the old routes most Benin Traders took to Ishan, particularly traders going to Okalo, Amahor, Igueben, Ebelle and Ewohimi areas. Many of the Urohi villages were founded by some of these traders and up to this day, the dialect and custom of Urohi are more akin to Benin than to any Ishan district.

Much, much later Urhobo and Itsekiri traders came to join the descendants of the Benin warriors. A UAC Camp grew with the exploitation of the vast forests which were once the curse of Urohi.

APPENDIX

A. OBAS OF BENIN

Before the arrival of Prince Oramiyan the rulers of Benin were the legendary OGISO (King of the sky!)

PRINCE ORAMIYAN				
1st.	ẸWẸKA I	about	1200	
2nd.	UWAKHUAHẸN	,,	1220	
3rd.	EHẸNMIHẸN (Brother) ...	,,	1235	
4th.	ẸWẸDO	,,	1255	
5th.	ỌGUỌLA	,,	1280	
6th.	ẸDONI	,,	1290	
7th.	UDAGBẸDO (Bro)	,,	1299	
8th.	OHẸN (Bro)	,,	1334	
9th.	ẸGBẸKA	,,	1370	
10th.	ỌRỌBIRU (Bro)	,,	1400	
11th.	UWAIFIOKUN	,,	1440	
12th.	**EWUARE THE SELFISH** ...	,,	1440	1st Portuguese visit.
13th.	ẸZỌTI	,,	1473	
14th.	ỌLUA (Bro)	,,	1473	
15th.	ỌZỌLUA (Bro)	,,	1481	Killed at Uzea.
16th.	ẸSIGIE	,,	1504	
17th.	ORHOGBUA	,,	1550	Educated and baptised.
18th.	EHẸNGBUDA	,,	1578	
19th.	OHUAN	,,	1608	
20th.	AHẸNZAE	,,	1641	
21st.	AKẸNZAE	,,	1661	
22nd.	AKẸNGBỌI	,,	1670	
23rd.	AHẸNKPAYE	,,	1676	
24th.	AKẸNGBẸDO	,,	1684	
25th.	ORẸ-ỌGHẸNẸ	,,	1689	
26th.	ẸWUAKPẸ	,,	1700	
27th.	AKẸNZUA I	,,	1710	
28th.	ERẸSỌYẸN	,,	1733	
29th.	AKẸNGBUDA	,,	1750	
30th.	ỌBANOSA	,,	1804	
31st.	ỌSẸMWẸDẸ	,,	1816	Prince Eredia-Uwa in exile at Ewohimi.
32nd.	ADỌLỌ	,,	1848	
33rd.	ỌVỌNRAMWẸ	,,	1888	Punitive Exp.1897.
34th.	ẸWẸKA II	,,	1914	Prince Aiguobasimwi in Ewossa.
35th.	AKENZUA II		1933	

B. IMPORTANT PEGS IN ISHAN HISTORY

1. Creation of the First Enijie 1463
2. The Idah War 1515-1516
3. The Akure War 1818
4. Kukuruku War 1850
5. Amahor War 1853
6. The Benin Expedition 1897
7. Introduction of Islam to Irrua 1898
8. The Arrival of the British to Uromi 1900
9. First Native Court Established at Uromi ... 1903
10. First Government School at Irrua 1905
11. Ubiaja Station Opened 1906
12. The First World War 1914
13. The Influenza 1919-1920
14. Establishment of the Ishan Enijie Council ... 1921

NOTE:

A word about dates particularly as shown against the reigns of the Obas. I took great pains to get the complete list of the Obas who have ruled in Benin because here in Ishan much of the oral transmission of our history is accompanied with names of the Obas who were then sitting over the destiny of Benin and its appendages. Though I got the list I was unable to get any documentary authenticity for the dates of their reigns which were available at the Benin Museum. There are therefore few dates I could put across to the reader with any degree of confidence; these few we owe to our early contact with the Portuguese, the first of whom visited Benin City in 1472 during the reign of Oba Ewuare who is so important in Ishan history. There is also written evidence for the date of the Idah War of 1515—1516, a period when the Ishan-famous Oba Esigie was ruling Benin.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS SINCE THE BRITISH OCCUPATION

The British arrived ISHAN in 1900 but the first officer to be resident in the Division moved into Ubiaja in 1906. Since then their official name has undergone several metamorphoses. First they went by the name of DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS, then POLITICAL OFFICERS and later they came to be known as DISTRICT OFFICERS (IDIO, a name that came to be well known in all the nooks and corners of the Division!). Soon these officers will assume yet another name — ASSISTANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS — when the Local Government Law comes to be applied to Ishan Division.

1906 — Mr. Crewe Reade — From Agbede he moved to Ubiaja after the acquisition of the Station by the Government in 1906. He lost his life during the riots in Owa, Agbor District.
1907 — Mr. Osmond Welde — A young avid hunter who was killed by an irate buffalo near Ilushi.
1908 — Mr. C. W. Todd — Relieved Mr. Welde after his untimely death in 1908. He first organized Empire Day Celebration for school children at Uromi.
1909 — Mr. Profit.
1909 — Mr. Henry Dene
1910 — Mr. F. N. Ashley — Francis Noel Ashley, a Londoner, was famous for his bluffy ways. He was transferred to Calabar where he became Senior Resident.
1911 — Mr. Henry Dene — His second tour in Ishan.
1912 — Mr. M. S. Cockin — Was the Political Officer whose vigorous action quelled the Agwa Rising of 1912.
1912 — Mr. F. N. Ashley.
1912 — Mr. A. N. Harper — A. Norton Harper sent Ojiefo the Martyr of Ewu to jail for crimes under the Indirect Slave Trade. He did his best to end Slave Trade in the division in 1913.
1913 — Mr. R. J. Sasse.
1914 — Mr. A. E. Hanson — He became a Senior District Officer in Ishan; he was torpedoed during the Great War.
1914 — Mr. E. E. Potter
1914 — Mr. H. G. Aveling.
1915 — Mr. E. M. Falk — Lieutenant Falk was so short that he earned the nickname of OTỌIRELE, meaning "for him the ground was never far-off!" He later became Commissioner of the Colony, Lagos.
1916 — Mr. E. A. Hanson — It was after his second tour in Ishan that he died at sea.
1916 — Lieut. Falk — alias, OTỌIRELE!
1917 — Mr. W. B. Rumann — Was a staunch Roman Catholic. He compiled the Ishan Civil Code. He was the District Officer who relieved Uromi of Ogbidi after the unrest in Uromi in 1918. During his second tour in Ishan he introduced the 2/- taxation.
1918 — Mr. H. G. Aveling

1919 — Mr. H. G. Aveling.
1920 — Mr. E. C. Palmer — He amended taxation in Ishan, exempting women and raising the men's tax.
1921 — Mr. W. B. Rumann — Always a legal minded man, he formed the all-powerful Enijie Council during this second tour.
1922 — Mr. R. J. Hook.
1922 — Mr. J. C. Hamilton.
1922 — Mr. E. C. Palmer.
1922 — Mr. J. Wann — Major Wann was a dreaded man because of the legend built round his loss of one leg. It was generally believed that he had government's authority to shoot anyone who laughed at his handicap!
1923 — Mr. G. A. Williams.
1924 — Mr. H. G. Aveling — Returned to Ishan for the third time in December 1923. He left in June 1924.
1924 — Mr. J. C. F. Pender — Stayed on till 1925.
1925 — Mr. R. L. Archer — Arrived Ishan in 1924. He was more interested in Engineering than politics. He began construction of the Ilushi Road that earned Alowa the loss of Ubiaja Throne.
1926 — Mr. R. J. Hook.
1926 — Mr. G. A. Williams.
1926 — Mr. E. C. Palmer.
1926 — Mr. E. B. Waton.
1927 — Mr. V. C. M. Kelsy — Was the District Officer during the confused agitation over the Osenuwegbe Cult. As a result many people, the guilty and innocent alike, landed in gaol. Many Enijie found themselves in trouble with Kelsy, notably, Momodu of Irrua, over the iron hand with which he wanted to root out the cult from Agwa, and Okojie of Ugboha, who believed so much in the Cult's Prophet that he was prepared to go to gaol than disown him.
1927 — Mr. H. Maddocks — For no reason at all, the Ishan Enijie, under the leadership of Momodu (Osobase) protested against Mr. Maddocks' arrival in Ishan; but Mr. Maddocks came and he made Ishan hell on earth for the Chiefs. What he did to Momodu was nobody's business!
1928 — Mr. E. B. Waton.
1928 — Mr. G. A. Williams.
1929 — Mr. J. G. Pykenott — Commander Pykenott, later Chief Commissioner, Eastern Region, helped in the compilation of the Intelligence Report for Ishan. When he was being sent to Benin his name created a big joke. The Secretariat had wired the Resident Benin that Pykenott was coming; but as usual the telegram was so mutilated by the Posts and Telegraphs that what reached the Resident was, "Pyke not coming" to which he promptly replied "Who is Pyke and why is he not coming?"
1930 — Mr. G. A. Williams.
1931 — Mr. V. C. M. Kelsy.
1932 — Mr. H. L. M. Butcher — He acted as Intelligence Officer after Captain Kawksworth had left. Coming to Benin

as a young A.D.O. he left it on March 22nd 1955 as its well known Resident.

1933 — Comdr. Pykenott.

1934 — Mr. R. J. D. Fremlin — Did his very best to unravel the murder of Okoruwa of Idumebo in March 1934, and the serious allegations against some prominent men in Irrua community.

1935 — Mr. H. F. Marshall — Rose from the post of A.D.O. to Resident, Benin Province. He relieved Mr. Hoskins-Abrahall as Lieut. Governor, Western Region and he became the Chief Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria on 8/3/55.

1936 — Capt. J. N. Hill.

1937 — Mr. A. P. Pullen — Captain Pullen (I pull all criminals to sorry bits!) was feared for his harshness. He devised the Pullen Markets of Lagos during the 1939 World War.

1938 — Mr. J. N. Hill.

1939 — Mr. H. L. McCullagh — He was conscripted into the Army during the last World War.

1939 — Mr. H. Spottiswoode — D.O. 2.

1940 — Mr. R. L. V. Wilkes — Popularly known as the OIBO ENE-DION, because he started the Elders' Courts.

1941 — Mr. R. L. V. Wilkes — Tried to abolish forceful marriage of children.

1941 — T. B. Bovell-JONES — The huge man with a small car!

1942 — Mr. R. L. V. Wilkes.

1943 — Mr. A. V. Scallon.

1944 — Mr. T. F. Barker — Was much feared for his harshness. He rose to the Rank of Resident and is at present Administrator of the Colony.

1945 — Mr. T. F. Barker.

1946 — Mr. F. D. McGrath — Later Clerk to the Western House of Assembly.

1946 — Mr. T. F. Barker.

1946 — Major W. S. Smith.

1947 — Mr. W. K. D. McRae.

1948 — Mr. W. K. D. McRae.

1949 — Mr. J. A. Bey.

1949 — Mr. J. A. G. McCall — Johnny McCall was more of a development Officer than anything else. School, Hospital, water supply etc., were parts of his varied interests. He introduced the democratic constitution of 1950 where the Clan Councils were popularly elected. From these the Ishan Divisional Council was elected. He left Ishan as an S.D.O. and a most popular Officer who could be firm without hurting. He is now Permanent Secretary — Ministry of Lands, Ibadan.

1950 — Mr. J. A. G. McCall.

1951 — Mr. J. A. G. McCall.

1951 — Mr. F. Preston-Potts — Francis Preston-Potts acted as District Officer after Mr. McCall.

1951 — Mr. W. W. Woodall — Acting District Officer.

1952 — Mr. W. R. Hatch — Richmond Hatch arrived Ishan as an

S.D.O. and later he acted as Resident, Benin. He is now Resident, Delta Province.

1952 — Mr. M. M. R. Haig — Murray Haig was the man who believed no one should be judged until heard. He was equally at home with the duke or the dustman and his anxiety to harm no one if he could help it created difficulties in a division where only a "stork" could rule.

1953 — Mr. M. M. R. Haig.

1954 — Mr. G. F. Harris — Francis Harris believed troubles were meant to be faced. His enemies took his utter disregard of popularity when there was a difficult situation to be handled as a sign of youthful impetuosity; Francis Harris hated nothing more than indecision and during the Tax Agitation of 1953—4 only his firmness saved bloodshed.

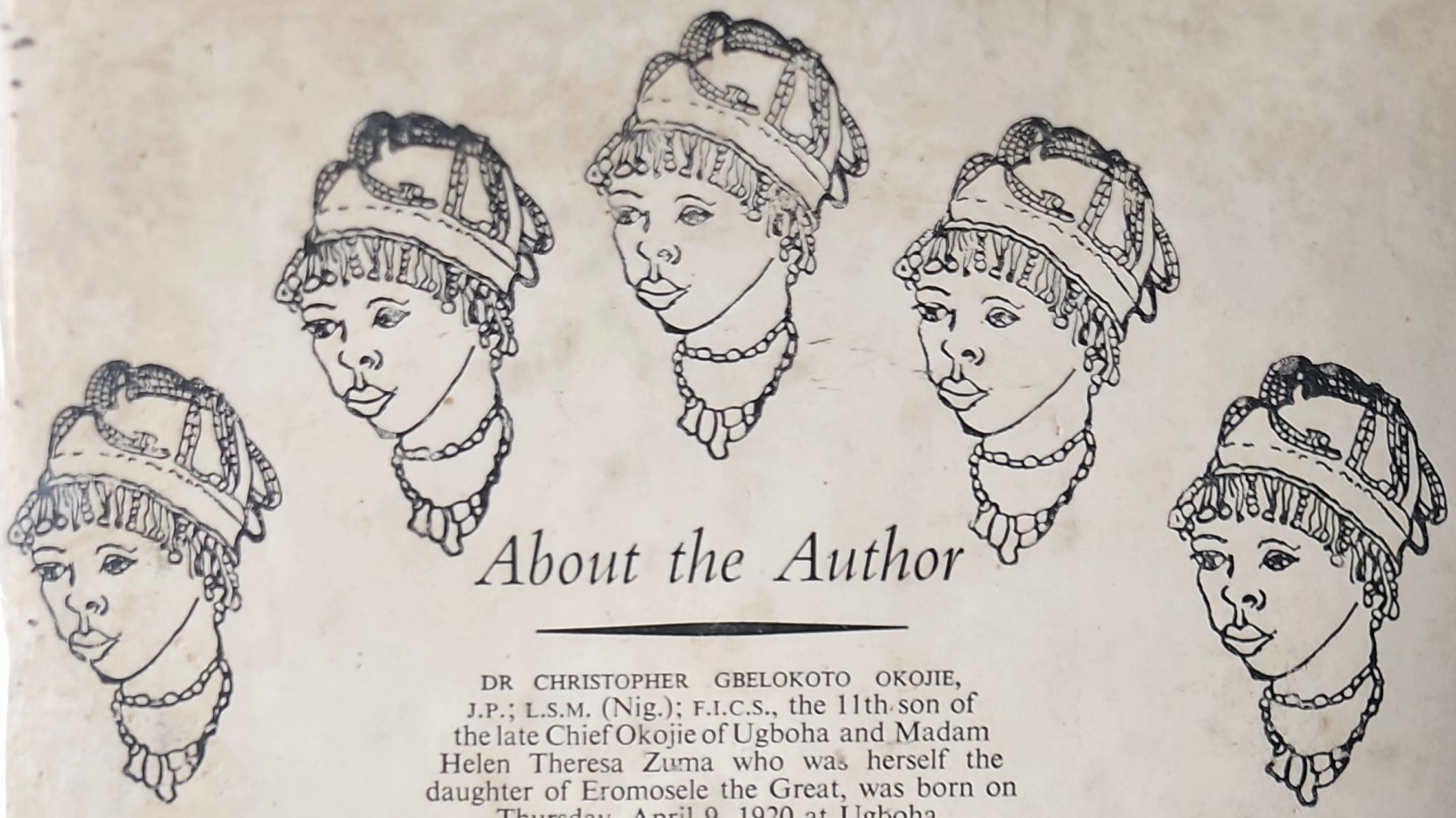
1955 — Mr. M. M. R. Haig.

1955 — Mr. C. Isles — Took over from Mr. Haig in February, 1955. He inherited an Ishan divided into bitterly warring factions. As a human being he is sure to tread on the sensitive foot of N.C.N.C. or Action Group unless he can found an Independent Party with headquarters in Mr. Isles' heart, mouth and pen!

1956 — Mr. Don Litch — More of a scholar than an Administrator who thoroughly hated Ishan politics.

1957 — Mr. C. J. M. Ross — By his time the post of Administrative Officer sitting at Ubiaja had become entirely advisory and the District Councils rejoiced in saying with their tongues in their cheeks: "His duty is to advise: that we can accept or reject!"

THE END.

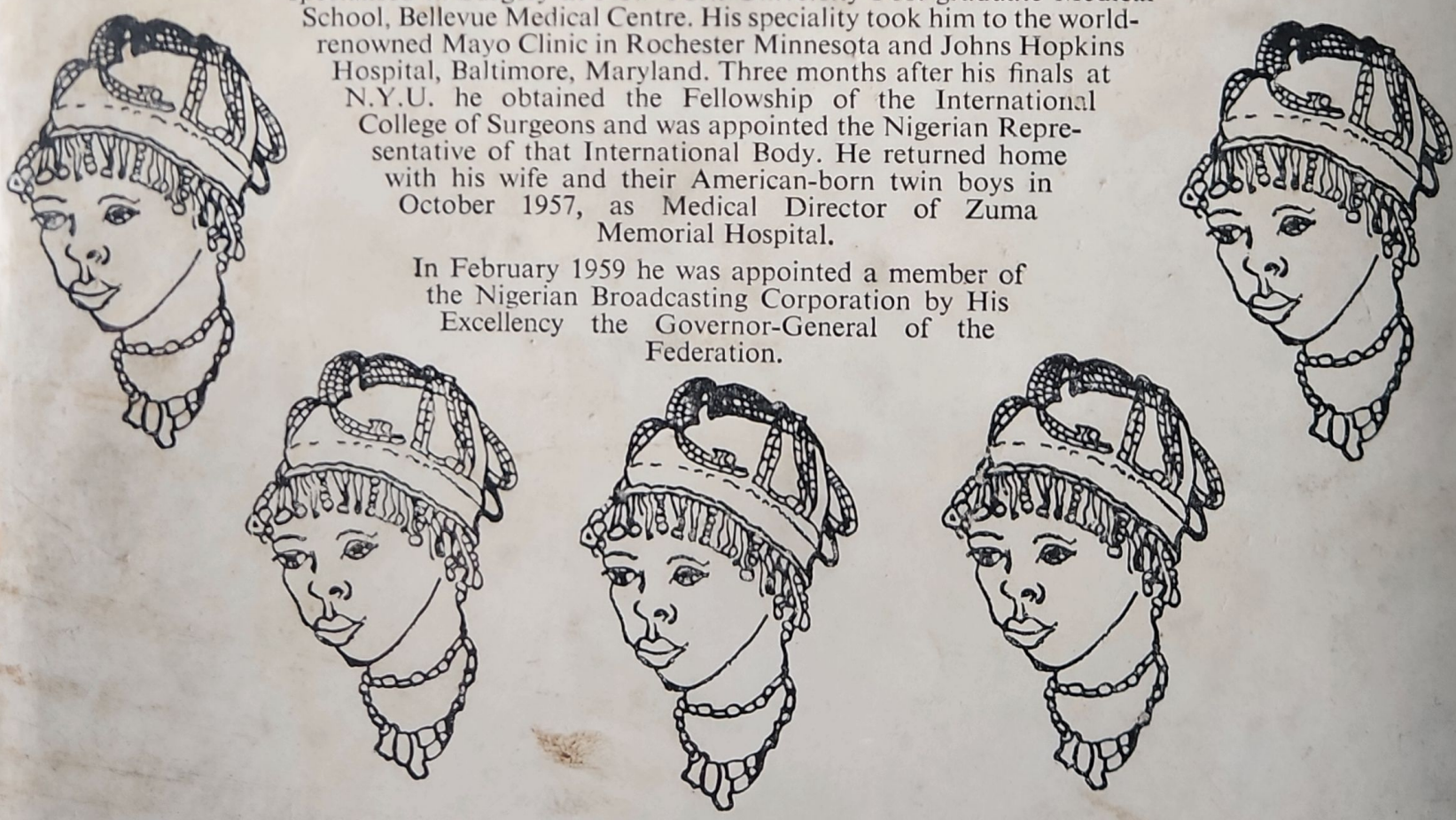


About the Author

DR CHRISTOPHER GBELOKOTO OKOJIE, J.P.; L.S.M. (Nig.); F.I.C.S., the 11th son of the late Chief Okojie of Ugboha and Madam Helen Theresa Zuma who was herself the daughter of Eromosele the Great, was born on Thursday, April 9, 1920 at Ugboha.

He began his education at the Catholic School, Ugboha, and completed his elementary education at Government School, Ekpoma, by winning a Scholarship to Government College, Ibadan, in 1936.

Sponsored by Mr M. E. Osobase he entered the Higher College, Yaba, for Premedical Studies in 1941. With another Government Scholarship he entered the Nigerian School of Medicine in October 1942 and qualified in August 1947. After three years' service under the Nigerian Medical Department he returned home to establish the ZUMA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, IRRUA on the 27th of March, 1950.

In 1956 he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in Surgery in addition to Smith-Mundt Scholarship which enabled him and his wife to proceed to the United States of America in September of that year. While Mrs Okojie studied Nursing Education at Teachers' College, Columbia University, the Doctor specialised in Surgery at New York University Post-graduate Medical School, Bellevue Medical Centre. His speciality took him to the world-renowned Mayo Clinic in Rochester Minnesota and Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland. Three months after his finals at N.Y.U. he obtained the Fellowship of the International College of Surgeons and was appointed the Nigerian Representative of that International Body. He returned home with his wife and their American-born twin boys in October 1957, as Medical Director of Zuma Memorial Hospital.

In February 1959 he was appointed a member of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation by His Excellency the Governor-General of the Federation.